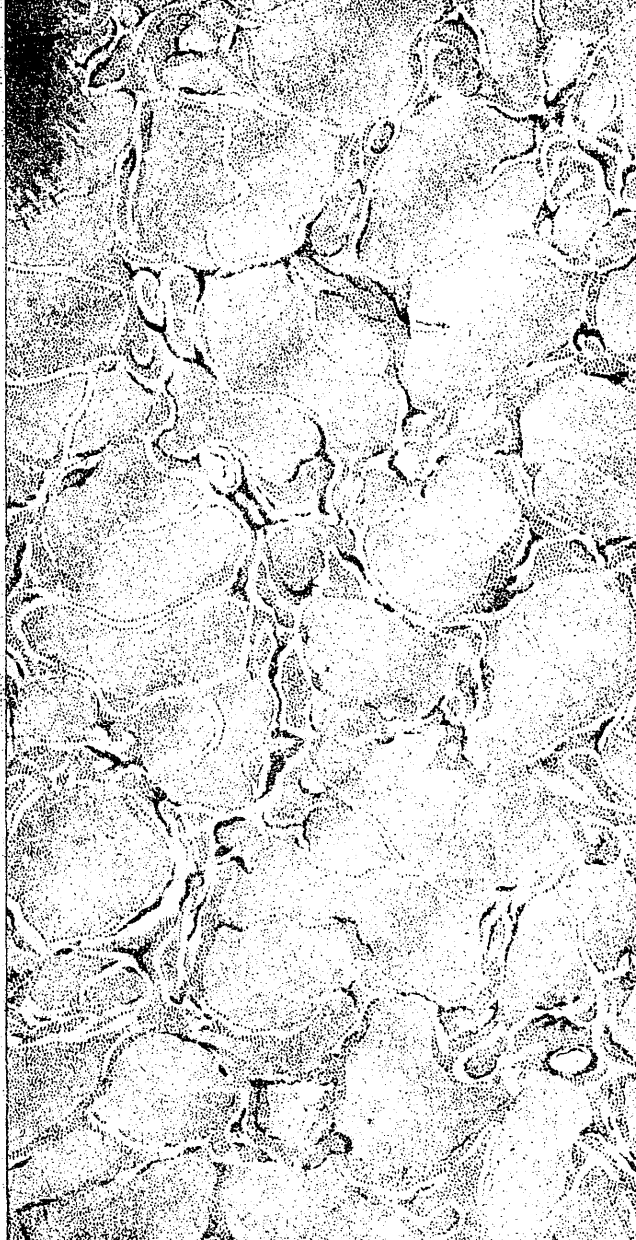


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Methodist Church (Canada)
Class-Leaders' Convention,
Toronto, 1891



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THE CLASS-MEETING...

PROCEEDINGS

OF THE

Class-Leaders' Convention

HELD IN THE

METROPOLITAN SCHOOL-ROOM AND CARLTON
STREET CHURCH, TORONTO.

ON

MONDAY AND TUESDAY, NOV. 2ND AND 3RD, 1891.



EDITED BY

HUGH JOHNSTON, D.D.



TORONTO:

WILLIAM BRIGGS,

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PREFACE.

THE undersigned was requested by the Rev. Dr. Briggs, Book Steward, to prepare for publication the proceedings of the Class-Leaders' Convention, held in Toronto, on the 2nd and 3rd of November, 1891. By formal resolution of the Convention, the members who had furnished papers were requested to furnish them for the press, and it was understood that the substance of what was given by the speakers, in the deeply interesting discussions of each session, should also be printed.

The Editor has had abundant material for a volume of three hundred pages, but in order to keep within the prescribed limits, he has been compelled to abridge and condense, using, at the same time, the utmost diligence to preserve each golden thought, and give a fair and full report of this soul-stirring, heart-warming Convention.

Pursuant to the resolution of the Toronto Conference, introduced by John J. Maclaren, Esq., Q.C., the committee met early in August, and organized, with Dr. Maclaren,

Chairman ; John T. Moore, Secretary; and R. S. Allen, Assistant-Secretary.

A General Committee was formed, and the proposal to hold a Class-Leaders' Convention in the autumn was heartily endorsed. After much careful thought, a programme was prepared, and the meeting called for the 2nd and 3rd of November.

Every detail of this programme was carried out on schedule time, and at the closing meeting the President had the supreme satisfaction of saying that not one disappointment had taken place ; that every minister and layman had discharged the work assigned him, and within the allotted time.

It need scarcely be said that this efficient working and success were largely due to the foresight and unsparing attention of the officers of the Convention, the President in particular.

Every aspect of the great question discussed is of vital interest to every member of the Church.

As early as the Conference of 1759, the Father of Methodism presiding, the question was asked, "Can anything be done to make the meetings of the classes more lively and profitable?"

This Convention marks an epoch in the history of

Methodism in Toronto, and will greatly strengthen the hold of this distinctive and time-honored institution upon the convictions and affections of our people; and these records are given to the public and to the Methodist Church in the belief that the perusal of them will render valuable and abiding service to Methodism and to Christianity, by inspiring the followers of Christ with more intelligent zeal and devotion, and a more consuming desire to spread Scriptural holiness throughout the land.

HUGH JOHNSTON.

84 SUMMERHILL AVE.,

Toronto, November, 1891.

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CLASS-LEADERS' CONVENTION.

OPENING SESSION.

MONDAY, *2nd November, 1891.*

THE CONVENTION met in the school-room of the Metropolitan Church at 2 p.m.

The prayer-meeting, led by Inspector Archibald, opened by singing the hymn "And are we yet Alive?" a number of fervent prayers were offered by ministers and leaders—male and female.

The Leader said :—I am in hearty accord with the sentiments and feelings of the hour. I hail with joy the calling of this Convention. Success depends largely in the start we make. Why not have here and now such an impulse and blessing as shall insure a Pentecostal influence and power? Talk about the early days of Methodism! Why not have repeated here and now the blessing of the Upper Room?

There is already manifest the presence of our Leader Christ, and our Guide the Holy Ghost.

Among the petitions offered were :—"Send upon us, O God, the spirit of consecration, the spirit of self-abnegation, the spirit of wisdom to guide us into all truth."

"Come to us in this Convention that we may be filled with holier zeal and stirred with stronger impulse."

"May the spirit of revival spread from east to west, from north to south through all our churches."

"Bless our Epworth Leagues and Sabbath-schools, and class-meetings and prayer-meetings, all our public ministrations and all our social services."

"May we as ministers and leaders be freshly anointed, and take our place in the Church as co-workers with God."

"May we be led by the Spirit. Help us to get low at Thy feet, where Thou canst teach us."

"We want to know how to conduct our classes. We want Heaven's qualification for leading and guiding them."

"May we rise higher into all the life of God, and go forth from this Convention baptized with the Holy Ghost and with power."

At 2.30, J. J. Maclaren, Q.C., chairman, and J. T. Moore, secretary, took their places on the platform. The chairman addressed the meeting as follows:—

I was led to propose in our late Annual Conference the holding of the present Convention because of a conviction that in some quarters there was a growing disposition to undervalue the benefits of class-meetings, and a tendency to regard them as no longer essential or obligatory in our Church. To my mind they are the necessary complement or adjunct of our itinerancy. While we have the annual or triennial change in the pastorate, we need the more permanent sub-pastorate of the leader. There were some isolated utterances in our last General Conference against the stringency of our rules regarding attendance at class. "You have no right," it was said, "to make attendance upon a human ordinance a test of membership in the Church of Christ." I can find no higher scriptural authority for requiring from Christians attendance upon public preaching than upon class or fellowship meetings. The Conference, in my judgment, wisely declined to sanction any laxity, but put the matter on what I think is the proper Christian basis. First, it is made the duty of the minister to see that all the members of the Church are enrolled in classes. Then attendance at class is made the duty of the members, as is attendance upon the other ordinances, viz., public worship, the Lord's Supper and the prayer-meeting.

And this I find to be both scriptural and in accordance with primitive Christianity. If we enquire as to the subsequent course and practice of the three thousand who were converted on the day of Pentecost, we are told that "they continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and FELLOWSHIP, and in breaking of bread and in prayers." Putting it into modern language, we might say that they went regularly to preaching, to class and fellowship meeting, to the Lord's

Supper and to the prayer-meeting. The Gospel chariot, which on the day of Pentecost was started on its triumphal course around the world, was a four-wheeler, and it will be found that that Church is likely to make the most progress which has all these four wheels in perfect form and in good running order. It was a gratifying fact which was brought out at the late Ecumenical Conference in Washington, that during the ten years since the first Ecumenical in London, the rate of increase in Methodism has been twice as great in the English speaking world as the general increase in population. Equally gratifying to us is the fact that in Canada during the decade the rate of increase in membership in our Church has been nearly four times as great as the increase in the population. Who will undertake to say how largely these results may not be due to the fact that we have this ordinance in its primitive completeness as an essential part of our Church system? Other Evangelical churches are coming more and more to appreciate its value, and in slightly varying forms to introduce it as a voluntary adjunct to their services. Surely this would be an inopportune time for us as Methodists to lower our standard.

I think there is no class of workers who have done so much for our Church, and for whom the Church has done so little, as the class-leaders. Think of all the helps that are now provided for our Sunday-school teachers in the way of volumes of notes, journals, leaflets and other literature. The foremost scholars of the day are bringing their minds to the exposition and illustration of the international lessons, and the Church scatters broadcast the results at a merely nominal cost. What is it doing for its class-leaders, who have even more arduous duties to perform, and who need all the help they can obtain? I sincerely trust and pray that the holding of this Convention may awaken a greater interest in this very important question and may lead to some practical result in aiding to some extent that worthy class which comprises such a large and important portion of the working lay-forces of our Church.

At 2.40 the first topic for discussion was introduced.

THE CLASS-MEETING : ITS PLACE IN THE METHODIST CHURCH.

The REV. DR. CARMAN, General Superintendent, read the following paper :

The class-meeting may not, even in the Methodist Church that makes so much of it, be exalted above, or used as a substitute for, the public preaching of the Word, or private and secret prayer. Even in the Methodist Church, where the class-meeting is a specialty and a peculiarity, it may not take the place of family devotion or of public and social prayer. Even in the Methodist Church, that has held the class-meeting as a test of membership, it may not crowd out the Sabbath School, the study of the Holy Scriptures, or united efforts in missions and charities. It may employ all these, grow by them all, energize them all, and direct them all ; but when it undertakes to feed and live upon itself, it runs into wildness and barrenness. On the other hand, there are those that use it aright, up to its measure, and in its proper relation to other means of grace, and thereby enrich all Church efforts and ordinances, and gather into the class-meeting itself the wealth of all.

If the Methodist Church is a household, a family, the class-meeting is the special intercourse of parents and children, the joyous participation of the bounties of the Father's table. If the Methodist Church is a commonwealth, a holy estate, the class-meeting sets forth its glorious privileges and immunities to the subjects of the wise and beneficent King. If the Methodist Church is a heavenly city, lying four-square, the class-meetings are the gates by which aliens may find their way to citizenship, and out of which giants and hosts should go forth to conquer. If the Methodist Church is a school, the class-meeting is the most thorough and skilled instructor in the doctrines of salvation and the experiences of the Christian life. If the Methodist Church is an army, the class-meeting is the best training ground of recruits and the best preparation of veterans for war. If the Methodist Church is a temple, the class-meetings are

the grandest corridor of its processions and the loftiest dome of its song.

If the Methodist Church has achieved anything for God or humanity, the breath of power and the light of wisdom came upon her in the class-meeting and attended her in the sojourn of the wilderness. If the Methodist Church has been successful in leading lost souls to bliss, and making heaven itself ring with the anthems of the saved, the long line of witnesses attest the value of the class-meeting, and render praise and thanksgiving to God that He ever led John Wesley to the revival of the ancient and primitive communion, and to the use of so glorious a means of grace. What the class-meeting has been, it may be now. What it has done, it can do now; aye, and greater things. Only let it keep up its measure to the fulness of the Church's increasing power.

What place does the Methodist Church give the class-meeting? This is by no means the same as the question, What place does Methodism at large give the class-meeting? The bodies of Methodists are not perfectly at one in their standards of orthodoxy, some embracing both Articles and Wesley's Sermons, and others taking the Articles alone; even so they are not at one in the ecclesiastical value set upon the class-meeting. And at this we need not wonder, for we ourselves have very much changed its relative disciplinary value in our Church. Not long ago attendance upon class stood alone among requirements as to means of grace as a test of membership. In this regard the class-meeting has been sensibly degraded, not so much by casting it down from its eminence as by destroying its pre-eminence; that is, by exalting other means of grace, intrinsically as valuable and scriptural as itself, but, after all, possibly not entitled to the high plane of the membership test.

We have set up with the class-meeting preaching, prayer and ordinances, and it yet remains to be seen what will be the effect of spreading discipline out so thin, and virtually breaking down all tests of membership by means of grace: for one fails in this, another in that, and nearly all somewhere; so because we may not discipline one without disciplining all, we let all alone. The class-meeting test, as a key

position, was to preserve spirituality in our membership, and so secure fidelity in all things, and it is doubtful if we gain by its abolition. The Methodist Church, as a special organization for a special end, was justified in adopting a test that helped toward that end, so long as it did not in any way contravene Holy Scripture, even though other Churches could get their people to heaven without the careful use of that particular means of grace. The question is, whether they led them to as high spiritual life, and whether, without the example and influence of Methodism, they had done half the work they have accomplished.

We have for our consideration two themes: (1) The class-meeting in its origin, design and work. (2) What place the Methodist Church, as it now exists in Canada, has given the class-meeting; whether that place is won by its own intrinsic excellence and vigor, yielded because of venerable associations and heroic fame, or maintained by legislative provision and authority, as a thermometer in a school room or a barometer in an observatory. First, Is the class-meeting essentially a good thing? Does it justify itself and clear its own way? Second, If so, is the Methodist Church giving it a fair chance, imposing no disabilities and using it for all it is worth? Some time devoted to the consideration of this and kindred themes ought to pay us well: for we are alway and everywhere beset by many dangers. We accept what has become customary without examination; we receive what has the authority of a great name upon the respect in which the name is held and not upon the merit of the benefaction itself; we are prone to let slip the good out of the best institutions and arrangements, and often through lack of vigilance to admit and incorporate what can result only in weakness and decay. It is good, safe and indispensable to recur at times to first principles, and take our bearings from the fixed stars.

Like most of the institutions in Methodism, the class-meeting, and the class-meeting system, is a growth; evidently a providential development. It is a true case of evolution—a God, a personal Christ, an Almighty and All-Wise Holy Spirit before it, in it, through it and behind it; and then the growth, and then the fruit. Like other in-

stances of evolution in nature or grace, it begins a long way down after creation, provision and nurture, and we can see at this end a little of the product, and after the manner of scientists, frame thereupon our brave conjectures.

The class-meeting is sometimes called the seed-germ of Methodism, the protoplasm, the ultimate unit. This, however, is by no means the fact. The *Society* is primordial in Methodism. The *Society* is the ultimate and original unit. The *Society*, gathered around its pastor, quickened in every part and particle by the indwelling, life-giving Christ, is the germ whence all the growth of ministry and membership, of organizations and agencies proceeds. And the Society is what naturalists call fissiparous: it can divide and live downward, as well as expand and fructify upward. "Fissiparous," says the lexicographer, "is a generation or production, by the spontaneous division of the body of the parent into parts, each of which becomes a living animal." Glorious, divine life-force *may* manifest itself in *many forms*, but *some demonstration* it must have. Clearly, Methodism is the result of a spiritual and divine impulse.

"In the latter end of the year 1739, eight or ten persons came to Mr. Wesley in London, who appeared to be deeply convinced of sin and earnestly groaning for redemption. To them, and as many more as desired to join with them (for their numbers increased daily), he gave those advices from time to time which he judged most needful for them; and they always concluded their meeting with prayer suited to their several necessities. This was the rise of the United Societies, first in Europe and then in America. Such a Society is no other than 'a company of men, having the form and seeking the power of godliness, united in order to pray together, to receive the word of exhortation, and to watch over one another in love, that they may help each other to work out their salvation.' There is only one condition previously required of those who desire admission into these societies, 'a desire to flee from the wrath to come and to be saved from their sins.'"

Who will say, that if the Methodisms of the world had been true to John Wesley's class-meeting in its spirit and design, the cause of the Redeemer had not been many times

in advance of its present attainments? Who will say, that by such impulses and tidal liftings it had not escaped many shallows and narrows where it has been sadly detained and forever put behind? Who will say, that if the class-meeting had been used for all it is worth, many evils had not been repressed or avoided, and many expedients and even separated organizations, that seem by the circumstances to have been demanded and justified, had never been required? And who, on the other hand, will have the hardihood to say that the Methodisms of the century have been true to the class-meeting, or obtained from its use what fidelity to God and the Christian brotherhood would have secured?

At a glance it is apparent that the class-meeting has two vital bonds: one with its membership in the brotherhood of Christ, the other with the United Societies, or the Church of God. Its primary aim is personal, spiritual, experimental religion: "How does your soul prosper?" A question like that goes clashing, crashing through a thousand rituals and dogmas; through ten thousand doubts, speculations and fears, through a score of creeds and theologies, through a host of ethical platitudes as to personal responsibility, and demands, How is it with yourself? How do you stand in relation to God? What do you know of your own spiritual condition and need, and of God's willingness and power to save? The most damnable doubt under heaven is the grim spectre that casts its shadow over the doorway of the soul, and declares you may not know your iniquity removed, your sin pardoned. Whether it enslave man and dishonor Christ by exalting another priesthood and service in the place of Christ and His divine offices, or by upholding venerated dogmatic systems in spite of the invitations and assurances of the living Word, the darkest doubt, the one nearest the soul and the one nearest perdition, is that which lifts up itself in the name of the Church of God. All the questionings of sceptics, all the threats of unbelievers, are not for a moment to be compared to it. But our glorious class-meeting inquiry hurls them all, external and internal, aside, and brings the soul face to face with God. What a sublime man is the true class-leader! what a sublime hour is such a spiritual service! Clearly the first stroke is sharp and direct for personal, spiritual, experimental religion.

The second stroke is as evidently of like aim and intent : "To advise, reprove, comfort or exhort as occasion may require." Preaching on general principles may be easy ; dissertation on doctrine may be a fine intellectual exercise, but when a true soul states his experience, and a true leader comforts, reproves and exhorts, they must know something about religion, they must speak that they do know and testify that they have seen. Here is the penetrating, probing, potent hour. Alas that not more enter into the secret of its power. Not the confessional of Rome, with its prurient enquiry, its suggestive query, and its farcical absolution ; not the assembly overawed by the stillness of quietism and the vain expectations of theosophy ; not the rant, rattle and clatter of the excitable crowd, accepting sound for sense and noise for devotion ; but the solemn hour for self-examination and rational, earnest conversation under the light of the Divine Spirit and the doctrines of the Holy Word ; the helpful hour of fraternal counsel and godly sympathy and prayer ; the hopeful hour of the radiance of an eternal bliss shining upon the dark and tangled pathways of our earthly existence.

The class-meeting ! What would the Methodisms of earth be to-day without it ? Take the class-meeting and its fruits away, and what would you have left ? Blot it out now, and what will become of Methodism ? Double, triple, quadruple its efficiency, simply make it what it ought to be ; what it is capable of being and doing, and what will your Methodism be ten years hence, but more and more the irresistible army of the living God, marching on with tenfold faith, strength, speed and courage to instant and constant victory ? On the other hand, let the class-meeting droop and die, let it be underestimated, disparaged and neglected, then no matter what our preaching, no matter what our ordinances and ritual, no matter what our outward show and decency, ten years will give us a host of formalists, a valley of dry bones, a multitude of dead men.

Cranks there may be in class-meeting, and old treadmill stories may go their round and round, even from one generation to another, but the irrepressible vigor of this invaluable social means of grace mounts above all, and leaps a living

flame to greet the cloven tongues of fire bursting from out the holy energy of the skies.

We have dwelt so long on the Shekinah side, the heavenly side of the class-meeting, amid the glory, hallelujah, that we are apt to do as thousands have done and gone astray, that is, lose sight of the earthward side and fancy we can live forever in the glowing clouds. But what to the ancient Church was a pillar of fire by night, was a pillar of cloud by day ; and there was just as much Shekinah in the lowering cloud as in the brightening flame. So, lest we be unduly excited or elated overmuch, that our feet may still keep to the earth, and our heads act upon their own level, let us, true to the genius of the class-meeting, take up a collection. It will keep us cool and in happy equilibrium. Another duty of the class-leader is to "receive," and, therefore, of the class to pay "what they are willing to give toward the support of the ministers, church, and poor."

What has become of this financial system ? Who threw the ballast overboard and left us at the mercy of the gales of enthusiasm and the blasts of fanaticism ? Who blasted this germ of systematic beneficence ? Who threw instruction and practical work out of the class-meeting and perverted the sacred hour to effervescence, sentiment and gush ? Who disregarded the practical, intellectual, rational side of this whole business, and made it a matter of artificial and sometimes even artful emotion, and fruitless cries and tears ? Who changed Wesley's disciplined and effective cohorts of twelve, like unto twelve sentinels put in charge of the twelve gates of the Holy City, into unmanageable and ill-assorted crowds of all ages and attainments, with no bond of union, and no inspiration of a sublime mission and a great work ? Not all ministers, not all class-leaders have done these things ; but by far too many ; and the results are in many cases too apparent. Had this class organization, with this intent been faithfully applied, who will say Methodism had not been far mightier and more powerful than it is to-day ? Who will say that it has been faithfully applied ? Who will say that the substitutes and expedients have done the work so effectively as it might have been accomplished by the original plan ?

We have given all the time we can afford to the interior relations and offices of the class : let us see how it looks in the functions and obligations of Church maintenance, Church extension, and Church discipline. Like the individual Christian, the class cannot live to or for itself alone. The minister must be informed "of any that are sick or that walk disorderly, and will not be reprov'd."

One of the difficulties of Church discipline to-day is to secure some one at the proper time and in the proper spirit to prefer charges against a sinning member. There are charges enough for anger, strife or personal ends, but charges for the Church's character and purity ; charges for the cause of God and the benefit of the offender himself are rare enough. It is simply astounding that professing Christian men should have so little knowledge and appreciation of the nature and ends of discipline, and so little interest and moral courage in its prompt and healthful administration. Sometimes it would appear, if there is cowardice under the sky, or base temper or motive in assaults upon others, it is in the exercise of the lofty liberties of Church discipline. Men are mean and dastardly on the voluntary principle ; they are mean because they can be mean, and will do or refuse to do in Church courts what they would not dream of under the strictness and compulsion of civil tribunals. No wonder the Church sought, and some still seek, the alliance of the temporal with the spiritual power. It is but distrust and denial of the principles and forces of moral and rational government. The class and the Church should give a safe example of these things, and yet it is too often an example of naught but poltroonery and artifice. "Any that are sick."

The class was designed to partake much of the nature of a family. Is it not a scandal and a reproach to Christianity, especially to Methodism, that voluntary and human benevolences often surpass in their kindly and helpful offices the very Church of God ? That Oddfellows and Masons can do more to help unfortunate or distressed brothers than fellowship meetings or Quarterly Official Boards ? In the beginning it was not so. With the small class and active leader, meeting in due season, relief could be brought to the needy,

and attention and comfort to the sick. But with the hurly-burly Sabbath morning emotional meeting of any number from five to fifty, who is going to look after the sick?

No wonder Epworth Leagues and Orders of Deaconesses have been enrolled a necessity of the times, and prove a success. And as matters are, the Lord grant them more and more abounding success. What, say you, to the ignoring and neglect of the class-meeting! Certainly not, if the class-meeting does its work. But if the class-meeting resigns its place let us have something that will do the work, the indispensable work the class-meeting was designed to do. "Who is sick?" John Wesley expected the people within a reasonable sphere to be acquainted one with the other, and with each other's condition and circumstances, and not always wait for "an introduction." One of the best class-leaders I ever knew had a class that swarmed every year or two, and new hives gathered honey in new fields, largely because he looked after the social advancement and temporal advantage of those that came under his care, and made other leaders participants of his spirit and schemes. What glorious work good class-leaders have done in Methodism! What talents have they developed! With what resources of moral, spiritual and intellectual power have they enriched the Church of God! This very hour what are they doing in our Zion? This very hour how manifold more abundant might be the salvation of our God among us, and through us to multitudes we have reached were all our classes better organized and arranged, and all our leaders more fully up to the measure of their God-given, Church-strengthening, and soul-saving work! The Lord grant us such a revival!

If we give the class-meeting its place as a part of our economy, all our ministers and preachers must be deeply impressed with its importance, and must pour their full soul-tide into its currents and far-reaching streams. Some places need better organization, better supervision, more man-power. The power of God will come down as soon as the man-power, by the grace of God, lifts itself Godward. Our ministers must work with one intent, and so far as possible in these matters upon the same line. Of course

one man lays the foundation and another builds thereupon. What are you going to do if a man neglects or destroys all that his predecessors have built, and it may be, pulls up the very foundations themselves? Ministers may not make good class-leaders, and yet they do a great deal towards creating and educating them. They must inspire, instruct and direct. So far as practicable they must lay out the classes on the true class-meeting idea—not too large—not too small. It is a good spiritual cultivation to be a class-leader; and there ought to be one in twelve fit for that business. Class-leaders themselves must better prepare themselves for their duties, by mental discipline, by Biblical study, above all by personal consecration and true devotion. They must be led to see the grandeur and the responsibility of their position, and with a joyous and chivalrous spirit meet its claims. They must organize among themselves; be true to the leader's meeting, stir one another up to good work, profit by each other's example, and strengthen, assist and uphold each the other by prayer, sympathy, intercourse and holy fellowship in the great work God and the Church have committed to their hands. Furthermore, there must be hearty co-operation with the pastorate, and fidelity in all Church requirements and good discipline.

The discussion was opened by MR. WARRING KENNEDY, who said :

I observe that the term Methodist Church is a very comprehensive one. There are at least twenty-seven branches of the great Methodist family in the world, each holding the same doctrine, but separated by non-essentials. Up till the meeting of the last General Conference, the position of the class-meeting remained in the Methodist Church in Canada as it was in the days of Wesley—a condition of membership. The General Conference of 1890 added other conditions, viz., attendance on prayer-meeting, public worship, and the Lord's Supper, or, in other words, a member may be excluded for the continued neglect of any of these means of grace.

It is thought by those who favored this change, that it strengthens the class-meeting and puts it on a higher level.

I don't think so, however, and concur in the view expressed by our General Superintendent, Dr. Carman, that making this alteration in our Discipline was a mistake. There is not much fear of an individual who attends class-meeting neglecting prayer-meeting, public worship, or the Lord's Supper.

Class-meeting is a systematic time for Christian fellowship, and is peculiar to Methodism. A Church is a company of believers, and where such a company exists there will be fellowship, and attention to other religious duties is sure to follow, such as in the primitive Christian Church—the “breaking of bread” (communion), and “prayers.”

Methodism is a child of Providence, and class-meeting is a child of Methodism; it is not merely the outcome of a financial arrangement, which first called it into existence at Bristol, but is the result of a spiritual power moving in the hearts of the people.

Christian fellowship must exist. Call it what you may—testimony meeting, experience meeting; for such a meeting Methodism has a *systematic time*, which we call class-meeting. Where love reigns in the heart, it will seek fellowship, or where a desire for salvation exists, it will seek counsel and advice. “When the fire burned, then spake I with my tongue.” See Psa. lxvi. 16; Mal. iii. 16.

The late Bishop Simpson was once conversing with a lady in her parlor, and she said, “Bishop, I like the Methodists very much, but the class-meeting is a stumbling-block to me.” They spoke for some time on the subject of experimental religion, and at the close he said, “Now, madam, you and I have had a class-meeting together.” “O,” said she, “we have had a precious time, and if that is class-meeting, my prejudices are gone forever!”

“Sir,” said one whom Mr. Wesley had travelled several miles to see about the year 1733, “you wish to serve God and go to heaven; remember, you cannot serve Him alone, you must therefore find companions or make them. The Bible knows nothing of solitary religion.” Dr. Stevens says, “Wesley never forgot these words, which perhaps forecast the history of his life.”

Social religion is ordained of God in the following terms :

"Not forsaking the assembling of yourselves together as the manner of some is." Heb. x. 25. Also Matt. xviii. 20; Heb. iii. 13.

Methodism from the beginning has chosen class-meeting as the exponent of our personal piety and her spiritual communion is in obedience to the apostolic injunction: "But ye, beloved, building up yourselves upon your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life." Jude xxi. 22.

I am strongly in favor of attendance upon class-meeting, pure and simple, continuing as a condition of membership in our Church.

Mr. Wesley in Vol. II. of his works, page 487, writes: "Met the Society at Norwich, and found 150 who do not pretend to meet at all, of these, therefore, I take no account."

Class-meeting through a period of 150 years has proved itself essential to the spirituality and unity of the Methodist Churches by the mutual knowledge, sympathy, and love which it diffuses and cherishes through the membership, the aid it affords to the weak and tempted, and to all who sincerely and penitently are fleeing from the wrath to come.

Class-meeting is the great conservative element to which Methodism, more than to almost anything else, owes her prosperity in many parts of the world. Mr. Wesley says: "It can scarce be conceived what advantages have been reaped from this little prudential regulation, many happily experienced that Christian fellowship of which they had not so much as an idea before, and by the blessing of God upon their endeavors to help one another, many found the pearl of great price."

Committing the Society to the care of under-shepherds was rendered necessary by the large numbers which gathered around Mr. Wesley. It was another of those bold, simple, natural and serviceable devices which, led doubtless by Divine Providence, Mr. Wesley called into play. Mr. Wesley subsequently resolved to meet and speak with every member once in three months, and to each whom he approved he gave a ticket, and this practice continues to this day.

Methodism regards class-meeting as essential to the success of the itinerancy and the progress of the Church. Whitfield did not organize, Wesley did; and from that early organization; conserving the fruit of labors otherwise lost, has sprung its triumphant and ever-advancing march to universal conquest for Christ.

Restless as was the itinerancy of the Wesleys, they could only pay occasional visits to the country Societies. The leaders lived on the spot and met their classes every week at the appointed hour. By this means the work made steady progress, even when the Wesleys and their lay-preachers were called away to other scenes of labor. Their converts were thus knit together and kept from wandering back into the world.

In connection with this, now after a century and a half's experience, Mr. Wesley's words may be emphasized to-day: "The unspeakable usefulness of the institution, having been ever since more and more manifest." Isaiah, putting the prophetic telescope to his eye and looking down the vista of ages, sees multitudes flocking for spiritual instruction, and I doubt not that the followers of Wesley, as they moved to the various class-meetings, passed under the eye of the prophet when he exclaimed, "Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their window."

Class-meeting, as a bond of unity, has been approved and sustained by the Church Conferences of five generations in all the Methodist bodies with few exceptions, and by the examples and appeals of the mightiest names in the archives of our beloved Methodism. Dr. Adam Clarke, when stationed in Manchester, on his first Sabbath entered and recorded his name in a class book, saying, "Thank God I am again in a class-meeting." Richard Watson, when appointed to reside in London as Secretary of the Wesleyan Missionary Society, promptly enrolled himself in a class, which he attended in the midst of his pressing duties. Asbury and Whatcoat, Soule and McKendry, and a long roll of illustrious names in our trans-atlantic Israel, esteemed it the citadel and bulwark of our churches, and the *nucleus* around which they gathered and progressed.

This fundamental and most precious institution should be

jealously guarded by every Methodist pastor. The fathers held and addressed society meetings on Sabbath evenings after public worship, in relation to it, reproving neglect, and commending attendance on it as a powerful check to the spirit of worldliness and levity, an example many now desire to see earnestly and statedly followed, with *no uncertain*, but decided and frequent, insistence in pulpit ministrations.

The learned Paley acknowledged that the Methodist Societies were the truest representation and revival of primitive Christianity that has been seen in the world since the earliest Christian times. The Wesleys soon recognized this remarkable reproduction in their society of primitive and apostolic fellowship, and admired the more the way in which they had been led by Providence. Let us remember that the pentecostal inspiration can only be retained so long as not only the "Apostolic doctrine" but the primitive "Fellowship" is sacredly maintained. The doctrine and *the fellowship* cannot long be maintained in vital reality apart from each other. The easiest way for Methodism to decline is the neglect of the means of spiritual fellowship. The spiritual fellowship of Methodism is necessary in order to the life of its evangelical doctrine.

The standard of Church membership never should be lowered; rather bring our people up to it and increase their spirituality. If some habitually neglect class, let us not legalize what we deplore.

In seasons of revival there is no trouble on this line, and when the Church is lifted on a spring-tide of love, then she sits in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

If the spiritual fellowship of Methodism should gradually decline into a dying formalism, if her class-meetings become mere companies on paper, and her love-feasts come to an end, then we may write "Ichabod" on her walls.

REV. DR. JOHNSTON—I am glad that we are emphasizing the fact that the class-meeting rests upon a scriptural basis. We know its origin. The Society arose in 1739, but classes were not formed till February, 1742. They were consulting together how to pay off the debt on the Bristol chapel, when Capt. Fry said, "Let every member give a penny, and it

will easily be done." "But many are too poor." "Then," said the Captain, "put eleven of the poorest with me; I will see them weekly; if they can give nothing, I will give for them. Each of you do the same." "The very thing we have wanted so long," said Wesley. The collectors were to inquire into the behaviour of the members they visited.

Within six weeks the great organizer had introduced the same plan in London. At first the leaders visited each member at his own house, but this was found to be inconvenient, and it was soon agreed to meet together once a week for prayer, singing, and religious conversation. "This," says Mr Wesley, "was the origin of the classes, for which I can never sufficiently praise God."

But no Church, professing to be a part of the universal Church, can make the door of entrance narrower than the great Head of the Church has made it.

Our General Conference has not degraded the class-meeting; it has lifted up the other Church ordinances to their true place.

It is not enough to speak of the value and utility of the class-meeting; it is in accord with New Testament teaching. Fellowship is an essential element of the Christian Church, and the class-meeting is the mode of realizing that communion. Until we can find something better, let us stand by the old ways.

REV. A. M. PHILLIPS, B.D.—I most heartily agree with Dr. Johnston that the Church should provide for Christian communion, and that such may be secured through our class-meeting system; but I do not think that attendance upon class should be made a test of membership in a Christian Church. John Wesley did not so regard it. His position was that attendance upon class was a test of membership in the United Societies, which he regarded as a guild inside the Church, membership in which might be quite independent of attendance upon class. It was not until after his death that it was made the test of Church membership. And our General Conference, in making the class-meeting *a* means of grace instead of *the* test of membership, has only returned to the true Wesleyan idea. The constant enquiry, "How is it with your soul?" does

not lead to the development of that breadth of character that should be manifested in Christian life. It leads to a process of introspection that always terminates on self, instead of producing an outlook that reaches to the world and the various duties of life. Would it not be better to vary the question by asking, "How is it with your life?" or "What are you doing?" and thus produce more practical results. The class-meeting should be used as a means of making people better and fit to live, rather than a machine by which to get people to heaven when they are dead, or to work up some emotional feelings of happiness in this world. The great end should be the building up of Christian manhood. The question has been asked by the essayist, "What would Methodism be without the class-meeting?" My answer is, What are the other Christian Churches without it? Methodism by no means stands pre-eminent for Christian piety, or unparalleled in Christian zeal. The grandest Christian men and women of the world are not confined to the Methodist Church, neither does she solely excel in producing the highest kind of Christian character. We need something more than our present class-meeting methods to realize the best results from this means of grace.

JOHN T. MOORE.—It is amazing that any minister of the Methodist Church should say that the question for a class-leader to ask ought not to be "How is your soul?" but "How is your life?" This is a great mistake. A man's life counts for nothing if his soul is not right. The class-leader, enquires: "How fares it with your soul?" for this is the key to the whole matter. He knows that if that soul is sanctified by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and all its faculties are brought into sweet subjection to the Divine will, why, of course, the life will be all right. Soul-religion, and more of it, with all its deep emotions is what we all require, and then we need not worry about our manhood. A gospel of mere manhood is a poor thing. Manhood without Christ is worthless for salvation.

REV. DR. GALBRAITH.—A little girl being catechised by a clergyman on the "Creed," was asked what is the "Communion of saints?" She immediately replied, "A Methodist class-meeting, sir." Other churches believe in the com-

munion of saints; Methodists believe in and practice it. The Christian life has three aspects—the private, the social and the public. The private is nourished and developed by private prayer, studying the Word of God, and meditating thereon. This is the soul holding communion with God. The social aspect of the Christian life is sustained and strengthened by class-meetings, fellowship-meetings and the hallowed intercourse of believers among themselves. This is the Christian in his relation to his fellow-members in the Church of God. The public aspect of the Christian life is fostered and supported by the public means of grace, and the open, everyday practice of Christian principles. This is the life of the believer in its relation to all mankind. All churches make provision for the culture and growth of the private and public aspects of Christian life. The Methodist Church is the only one that has equally provided for the growth and maturity of the social aspect of the believer's life. This is the aspect which has been most neglected, and is most likely to be neglected; and, therefore, I think the class-meeting ought to be retained as a test of Church membership. It is essential to full-orbed Christianity.

REV. T. MANNING—The class-meeting is more popular in the Methodist Church to-day than it was twenty years ago. Attendance upon class cannot be forced, and should not be if it could. It is a providential means of grace, not a necessary one, and people must voluntarily attend class as a means of attaining the greatest holiness or they will not attend it at all. He agreed with Bro. Phillips that other churches prospered without class-meeting and that the Methodists had no monopoly of holiness. Nor, could he say that the Methodists were any more zealous for the salvation of the world than some other churches. But the need all churches had of something like a class-meeting was seen in the social organizations of nearly all the churches in these last days. He also thought that while class-meeting had duly encouraged the emotional faculty, it had not laid sufficient stress upon how men live.

DAVID ARCHIBALD—The late Dr. Punshon stated that the man must be a great churl who could not enjoy him-

self with his neighbor. At the same time there must be something radically wrong with the man who can enjoy himself better in his neighbor's than in his own home and with his own family. I have no quarrel with any of the Christian churches. I bid them God's speed in their work, but I like my own Church best of all, and I would not be a Methodist were I not convinced that it is the best Church, and furnishing the best means for my own spiritual growth and development. Now, coming to the class-meeting, to give my own experience: I never yet knew a member of the Methodist Church who had the privilege of attending the class-meeting, and failed to use it, who did not back-slide, and this will apply to theologians and scholarly men and even include members of the General Conference, for whatever man, or body of men, touches the class-meeting, touches the Lord's anointed.

REV. MANLY BENSON—We need more thoughtful teaching in the class-room. We had already far too much superficial experience. True religion is often accompanied by emotion, but emotion *alone* is not religion. We have too much of the "I am so happy," and "I am so glad" kind of testimony. Profession is good, but a religion of good works and deeds carried into every day life, out of the class-room into the market, office and business of daily life, is what this age is demanding and must have. We cannot discipline men and women *into* the class-room; we can, by that method crowd them out. I find our godly people, as a rule, love this social means of grace. Our people need not only to grow in *grace*, but in the *knowledge* of the truth.

The hour of 3.40 having arrived, MR. AMBROSE KENT introduced the subject:—

THE BEST METHODS OF LEADING AND SUSTAINING A CLASS.

It has long been recognized by the most thoughtful and discerning amongst us that in the class-meeting and other social means of grace lay the power and peculiarity of the Methodist Church. When these are thronged, you have the sure indication of a strong and vigorous spiritual life.

Where they are neglected, and all kinds of excuses made for non-attendance, you are not astray in concluding that religious fervor is chilled, if not reaching the freezing-point. I desire at the very outset of this paper to express my decided conviction, that when the class-meeting of our Church has become a thing of the past, we may safely write upon her history, "Ichabod! The glory has departed."

Long ago, a statement was made in Scripture which seems to carry in it the principal element embodied in the modern class. Away back in the olden times, we hear David exclaiming, "Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what He hath done for my soul." Psa. lxi. 16. And almost the concluding chapter of the Old Testament tells us that "Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another: and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon His name." Malachi iii. 16.

Here we have the warrant of the Word of God for the class-meeting, and the encouraging assurance that when two Christian people talk together, the Lord pays attention and writes down what they say. Early in the history of our Church, John Wesley recognized the importance of it, and gave it its origin in its present form. I have many times wondered whether (under God) his inspiration in this regard came simply from the circumstances and needs of the people, or whether it came, through the Spirit, from the Bible itself. Most likely from *both*, for we have the warrant and authority of both for its continuance.

These promptings were certainly from God, as the results have clearly shown. Wesley recognized that there was a power in personal testimony, and that it could be used with immense advantage in the building up of the Christian character, in awakening the thoughtless and sinful to a sense of their peril, and leading them to Christ. It was simply another instance of how the founder of our Church followed closely the example of his Master, viz., "Speaking that we do know and testifying that we have seen."

One of the characteristics of Methodism has even been its elasticity, its readiness, and its power of adaptation to

changed surroundings, and nowhere is there greater need of the recognition of a changed condition of things than here. The old-time class, as formerly conducted, is gradually losing its hold upon the people. Nor is there the same need of it that there used to be, inasmuch as almost every social religious service in these days is conducted so as to embrace the idea of personal testimony. I am not here, however, to apologize for the class, or to give reasons why it should be continued. It has already demonstrated its right to be. I have been requested to say a few words on "The best methods of leading and sustaining a class." I prefer rather to indicate some elements which must enter into a successful and well-attended meeting.

1. In every service there should be (a) our talking with God; (b) God talking with us; (c) and our converse with each other. In other words there should be prayer, the speech of the soul to God; the ladder on which petitions and blessings are to ascend and descend. Then there should be much of Scripture, for in it God is speaking to us; it is the expression of God's thought, of God's mind. And lastly, there should be fellowship or communion of the children of God.

2. The leader should be prompt in beginning and ending his meeting. Many are deterred from attending because they are in uncertainty as to when they can get home again. An indefinitely-extended meeting is sure to destroy the interest and lessen attendance.

3. He should avoid everything having the appearance of compulsion in the matter of speaking. Make this part of the service, in the broadest sense, voluntary. I have known some of the most serious-minded kept away because to speak was pressed upon them so strongly by the law of expectation, if not by the law of compulsion, that they were made to feel out of place and uncomfortable. Timid people, and those unaccustomed to these means of grace, are thus deterred from the enjoyment of a meeting that would otherwise become a source of profit and blessing to them. It is often said to these people when present that to fail to speak is to be guilty of a failure in confessing Christ, and they are often made to feel that they have grossly wronged their

Lord, in not "taking up" what is said to be "their cross." But surely all this is wide of the mark. A man may not speak in class, and yet may be daily confessing his Lord and Saviour in the wider realm and walk of life. The Divine Master did not say, "Everyone, therefore, who shall confess Me to men, him will I also confess before My Father which is in Heaven," but "Everyone who shall confess Me *before* men." This is, in the truest sense, a confession of Jesus Christ.

4. In order to make the class-meeting interesting, there ought to be variety in the order of the services, avoiding everything like monotony or sameness. No meeting should be more than one hour long. The singing should be frequent and lively, the prayers short and pointed; testimonies should be encouraged in the direction of trust and gratitude, and not in the line of doubts and fears. The leader should live himself in the sunshine, and help and comfort those who are disposed to the fogs and shadows. No haphazard reading of the Scriptures should be indulged in. Interest is often excited by reversing the order of the meeting, so that nobody shall know just how the meeting is to begin or close. One night a subject may be taken and discussed, such as the "promises" or "invitations" of the Bible; another night the members may be invited to come prepared to quote their favorite and most precious texts. At the last meeting of my own class we had for our theme, "The Lord's Prayer." The meeting was opened by a bright, cheerful hymn, and two or three brief prayers. Then came voluntary testimony, and next the theme, "The Lord's Prayer." It was taken up clause by clause, and nearly all the members exchanged views on the different petitions. A very marked interest was manifested by the members present, and at the close of the meeting many expressed themselves pleased and profited both from the study of God's Word and from the impulse to effort which they had received by meeting together.

5. A record should be kept of attendance. Members should be impressed with the fact that their presence is recognized, and their absence noted. If any are absent, they should be seen, and the causes of neglect learned.

The plan recently adopted in my class is as follows: We have members' cards announcing the meeting and place, and on the back of the card are the names of five members of the class. Each person has a card, and they are expected to visit the absent members whose names are on their list, and report any requiring a visit from the leader.

Another good method of sustaining a class is to have occasional social meetings, say at one of the members' homes. Hold the usual service for an hour, and then spend an hour in social conversation. In this way the members become better acquainted with each other.

In conclusion, I beg to say, that above everything else, and permeating everything, must be the promised Comforter, without whose presence the best of methods will utterly fail. The Spirit alone can give life, in this and every other department of Church work, for without Him we can do nothing.

REV. J. F. GERMAN, M.A., opened the discussion with the following address:—

I shall endeavor to avoid reference to points that have been discussed in the suggestive paper presented by Mr. Kent.

A Methodist Society is "A company of persons having the form and seeking the power of godliness, united in order to pray together, to receive the word of exhortation, and to watch over one another in love, that they may help each other to work out their salvation." The purpose of the class-meeting is to assist in securing these ends.

In the Scriptures physical wants are frequently employed to represent wants that are spiritual. For instance: Isa. lv. 2; John vi. 35; Matt v. 6.

What is the best method of sustaining an interest in the partaking of necessary physical food?

(1) Physical health and proper exercise, which will produce a vigorous appetite.

(2) Suitable food. By this we mean that the various articles of food are of good quality, are well cooked, are suitably served in a cozy, comfortable dining-room. Let these two elements—a *keen appetite* and *suitable food* be

brought together, and the interest and profit in the meal will be sustained. The best commendation of a boarding-house is not what the advertisement says, but what the boarders say.

If those who come to the table want something, and get it, they will come again ; but if they come with no appetite they will not appreciate the most wholesome food ; or if they come and get nothing, they will not feel like coming again. How can a vigorous fire be sustained ? By bringing together an approved furnace, and proper fuel. Whenever a want and a suitable supply meet, an interest is always sustained.

The same is true of the class-meeting. Let the place of meeting be commodious, attractive and comfortable. Let the members come having a conviction of sin, or desiring full salvation, earnestly longing for instruction or encouragement, in a word, "hungering and thirsting after righteousness," and we have one element of a successful class-meeting.

Let the leader retain the fervor of early piety, the zeal of a present consecration, and the freshness of an earnest, intelligent student of the Word of God ; let his deportment out of his class be above reproach, and his character above suspicion ; let him bring to his class sanctified common-sense ; let there be upon the part of members and leader, faith in God, in the truths of the Gospel, and in each other, and we have a second element of a successful class-meeting.

An important aid to this end should be found in the *pulpit*. If the pulpit will allow the tea-meeting speaker and the lecturer to amuse the people ; the politician, stump-orator and the secular press to deal with political and other scandals, excepting in so far as moral principle is concerned ; and if the man in the pulpit, out of a consecrated and loving heart and a well furnished mind, with a full realization of his tremendous responsibilities, earnestly presents the vital, practical truths of the Gospel, he will, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, produce that conviction of sin and desire for a better life which will make the class-meeting a welcome means of grace. The class-leader can also aid in this work by the manifestation of Christian sympathy with the members of his class, by personal visitation and conversation with them outside the class-room.

The members of the class can also contribute to this result by prayerful heart-searchings, by feeling their responsibility for their own salvation, and for the work of God in society. During a genuine revival of religion, how grandly a fellowship meeting succeeds. The people enter upon such a service wanting to receive or tell something, and there is no lack of interest. The people hunger, and the food is there. It may be thus with the ordinary class-meeting.

As to the best *method of leading* a class, I would not lay down any definite rule. The method should depend upon circumstances, and the talent of the leader. How absurd it would be to prescribe the same method for every preacher and for every service. I could not preach like some of my brethren if I were to try, and perhaps, I may add, I would not if I could.

A particular method is not an essential element of success either in preaching or in leading a class. The essential elements of a successful class must be present, whatever the method, and they may be present under diverse methods. There is a great variety in the methods of serving food, but in every case there is a felt want and a supply. There are various methods of sowing and reaping, but in every case there must exist the proper soil, good seed, and the forces of nature, in order to produce the harvest.

Living, hungry souls may be fed in a variety of ways, but no method will nourish a dead soul.

REV. JOHN HUNT—A profound philosopher, Sir Wm. Hamilton, says, "Aged men live in the past, while young men live in the future." Now, I want to say, not boastingly, but to the glory of God, that during my ministerial life I have received into the Church about 3,500 members. I may be forgiven if I say I love to dwell on the past, but I wish also to say that I am equally in touch with everything that relates to the present. I take it, we have done but little by simply getting members into the Church; it is far more important to retain, edify and build up character. The leader who can strike "the best methods for leading and sustaining a class" will do much towards accomplishing these objects. We require to know the individual members—their state of mind, heart and course of life. Some years

ago when about to engage in some special efforts, I stated to a class of nearly forty members, that I would like to ask certain questions pertaining to religious life and duties, such as private prayer, reading Scripture, family worship, etc. They all agreed to this, and thereby a knowledge of the inner life was obtained which otherwise could not have been reached. I believe it to have been a great benefit to all concerned, and make this statement as a suggestion to any leader present. Some years ago the devout and venerable Bishop Janes, addressing a class-leaders' convention in New York, advised that, as a variation, members might be requested to relate their experience by reciting a single text of Scripture. This would lead to searching and applying the Word of God. Then, at another meeting, he would ask for a suitable verse from our Hymn Book ; and everyone conversant with Charles Wesley's hymns, knows that something can be found in them descriptive of any degree of penitence, as well as exultant devotion. Both these plans I have adopted with profit on various occasions and places, and have no doubt it might be done again. But the Chairman's bell rings, and I have done.

REV. G. WEBBER—Admitting, as we readily do, the correctness and force of what has been so well put in the paper and the introductory address, a chief point still remains, how to gain the attendance, and hold the feeble, the weak, the easily-discouraged members. Strong, healthy Christians will always find their way to the class, and hold on to it and help it. But the problem is, how to make the class attract and build up the very feeblest, so that the class may strengthen, guide, keep, confirm, mellow and mature the poorest member committed to it. I think every leader should aim to create in his class such an atmosphere of fellowship, sympathy and spiritual power as will secure the very end he seeks. Also, carefully apply God's word of promise or guidance to the member's experience, that he may feel God's sunlight shine in upon his perplexity and God's power in his weakness. And the consciousness of God's presence and blessing will inspire and attract. The leader should and must visit his class ; know them as their sub-pastor, friend and helper, and study always to have food for them.

REV. DR. CARMAN—The most successful leader I ever knew did his work largely on sympathy and feeling, and somewhat on the Saviour's plan of loaves and fishes. It may seem mean, and appealing to mean motives, but it was Christ's idea to feed the multitude and then teach them. A brother has spoken unfavorably of political allusions in sermons, but there are men sitting in our churches, wielding crushing monopolies and rolling in the wealth thereof, that make Christian fellowship a great difficulty, if not an impossibility. And when they frame iniquity by law, I confess I see no way but to hurl the red lightnings of Sinai at them, or the thundering denunciations of St. James. We make the seats too soft in our churches, and fill them, if we can, with earth's respectability. Such men must be taught, especially when they profess to be religious men, what are the obligations of wealth to Adam's needy sons. The class-leader of whom I speak, would help the members of his class in their business and in times of trouble. I have known him to provide on Saturday night for destitute people in his class to tide them over Sabbath till they could get work ; and, with such a heart and such a hand, he had no trouble in keeping his class full and jubilant. His class would fill up and swarm among the poor, making the poor rich, and the rich richer. As well as Christianity, we must throw some humanity, some heart, some justice and equality into our work. Rather, we must get that view of Christianity that embraces a genuine humanity.

REV. J. V. SMITH—The success of any kind of work depends largely upon the vigor and enthusiasm with which it is done. The leader, as a sub-pastor, will succeed or fail in proportion as he keeps himself in touch with the entire membership of his class. To secure a large average attendance at the class, there must be faithful, persistent visitation of absentees. If non-attendance is allowed to go by default, without any effort on the part of the leader to remedy the evil, then the result will necessarily be a small class and a barren meeting. Many leaders grow discouraged because their members do not attend. On the other hand, many members grow careless and cold because so little concern is manifested for them outside of the class-room. Let the

leader call upon these careless ones, not merely once, but time and again, and I am persuaded that such self-sacrificing efforts will make short work of his discouragement on the one hand and their neglect of the means of grace on the other.

REV. GEO. J. BISHOP—The class-meeting has been spoken of as appealing principally to the emotions. In my experience I have not found it so. On the contrary, it is a place where one can calmly and seriously consider the things that will be helpful in their daily life for God. No one can dislike more than I do the "I-am-so-happy" kind of religion that we have too much of; and yet I can see that to-day, as a rule, the tendency is to restrain religious emotion to the injury of an earnest and aggressive religious life.

J. C. VAUGHAN—With regard to repetition of experience, I have in my class an aged father in Israel, who is nearing the promised land, who always opens his experience by bearing testimony to the fact that he is another week's march nearer home. This is a repetition of something old and yet blessedly new. In reference to the best means of increasing the membership of a class, I have not much sympathy with the so-called unsuccessful leader. I do not believe in polished shafts generally in the Lord's work. I prefer the pick and shovel, or the ploughshare, by which the fallow ground may be broken up, so that the good seed may have deep soil which will bring forth fruit to the honor and glory of God. As to the sustaining of a class, my conviction and also my experience are, that in view of the fact that while God's Holy Spirit is at work souls are thirsting for the water of life. When once these souls are helped to drink with joy of the wells of salvation, there will not be very much difficulty in getting them back again. In fact they will want to return to where they have had their wants supplied. I am also of the opinion that it is clearly the duty of a leader to carefully watch over his flock, and if one strays away it is his duty, if possible, to bring that one back to the fold again. I believe in the ninety and nine and also in the hundred, and it is just as much the duty of a leader, if he has ninety and nine left, to look after the stray sheep as if had only half-a-dozen left.

REV. A. M. PHILLIPS, B.D.—I most heartily endorse the paper read by Mr. Kent. The kind of methods will all depend upon the object of the class-meeting. If it is merely to arouse religious emotions and enthusiasm, then methods to that end should be used; but if the purpose of the class is to edify, to build up in Christian character, then quite different methods should be adopted. The latter is my idea of the class; it should be a training-school for the development of a true Christian manhood, based upon a true conception of Christian life. I believe in, and have, religious emotions; but true emotions are not the direct result of means used to that end, but rather an indirect product of edification which comes of an increasing knowledge and appropriation of divine truth. Religious feeling and religious thinking should not be divorced. They are inseparable, but the feelings should grow out of the thinking. The emotions should be the product of truth appropriated and lived. Such a union will produce the grandest results in the largest and noblest kind of character. I believe that we should get better results in our class-meetings if there was more teaching and less relating of general experience, which is so often a mere repetition. I assert that my conviction is that the ordinary relation of experiences in our classes varies but little. Many of the best and most intelligent people in our Church tell me that they derive no benefit to their Christian life from such experience meetings. The Society of Christian Endeavor has been referred to as a means by which the other denominations are securing the benefits of the class-meeting. It should be noted that the Christian Endeavor method is the kind I have suggested, and is, to my mind, the class-meeting idea adapted to the needs and circumstances of this end of the nineteenth century. Growing in grace by growing in knowledge of the truth, and increasing in the doing of good works is the Christian Endeavor idea, and would greatly add to the usefulness of class-meetings if adopted by them. Conversations by our members on what they know of God's thoughts, feelings, will and purpose concerning man and his duty, and on what they had done for God and humanity during the past week, would produce grander results on the

character and life than a periodical rehearsal of how "I feel." I assume, in all cases, an experimental knowledge based upon a spiritual life.

The hour for adjournment having arrived, the Benediction was pronounced.

MONDAY EVENING, *November 2nd, 1891.*

The Conference re-assembled at 8 p.m., Dr. Maclaren in the chair. Mrs. Mills presided at the organ, and, as during the afternoon, led the singing. Rev. J. J. Redditt conducted the devotional exercises, reading the Scripture and offering prayer.

The Conference proceeded to the consideration of the topic :

MISTAKES OF CLASS-LEADERS,

which was introduced in a paper by REV. W. J. MAXWELL.

Fault-finding is not one of my virtues. To cultivate a dormant gift must have been the object of the programme construction committee of this Convention. My life-long litany has always had room for this petition : "From men with more eye than brain, more tongue than heart, more horns than head, flaw-hunters and fault-finders, 'Good Lord deliver us.'" Notwithstanding, I find myself Lord High Commissioner of this profitless business to-night.

The topic suggests the existence of mistakes. I regret that to me has been committed the task of discovering and announcing them.

It would savor more of fulsomeness than truthfulness to say that any class-leader is so correct as to escape the criticism of this paper, and it may be found before I resume my seat that the critic was the most prolific blunderer, and the paper on mistakes was the most monstrous mistake of the Convention.

NEARLY PERFECT.

May I be allowed to make an undisguised bid for the good-will of some of my audience, by announcing that while none of us are absolutely free from mistakes in our class-work, yet there are some who come very near perfection. I knew one of whom it might be truthfully asserted, that he had not made more than one mistake. That was perpetrated the day he accepted the position of leader, and which has been perpetuated during his continuance in the office. He died some years ago, but his mantle has fallen on some who continue with us till this day. An unfailing remedy is always at hand, viz., prompt and positive resignation.

LIMITATION.

To circumscribe a leader's sphere of operation is a common mistake. His workshop is not confined within the four walls of his class-room. His work-tools are not all platitudes padded with psalms and hymns and sentimental songs. He must learn to use the *hammer* of the Word, and the *chisel* of rebuke, and the *saw* of reproof, and the *file* of exhortation. He must know how to make best use of the cross-grained, the knotty, the shaky and the sapwood. His duty comprises offices agreeable and disagreeable, nor will the regular and acceptable performance of the former make atonement for the neglect of the latter.

He is a sub-pastor, and the most pleasant part of his work is to meet in the class-room the faithful ones who "fear the Lord." It is equally his duty to meet somewhere and sometime the absentees.

One of the questions in a leaders' meeting outlines this department of his work. Are there any who habitually neglect the means of grace and will not be reproved?" How can the leader answer the latter if he never reprove the offender, and how can he answer the former unless he has acted the part of detective, when the Word is being declared, when the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper is being administered, and when the public prayer-meeting is assembled? A more successful leader than Carvosso never graced a class-room, having charge betimes of four classes. On com-

munion occasions he was always among the first to partake, and then seated himself on the pulpit stairs to note the absentees. At the earliest opportunity he would visit them, his heart burdened with loving entreaties and faithful warnings, and his mouth filled with irresistible arguments. 'Tis his not only to visit the sick with soothing speech, but with winsome words to woo the erring, and with sharpest reproof to warn the unruly.

PREPARATION.

In the class-room, as well as in the pulpit, it is a common error to mistake glibness for good sense, the gift of God for the gift of the Holy Ghost, and a ready utterance for the grace of preparation. That man does not live who can intelligently lead a class without suitable preparation. Reading suitable and Biblical literature will furnish the mind with the necessary stock. Meditation will classify it, and suggest the portion and proportion for each, according to his peculiar needs and circumstances, while fervency will excommunicate formality, and give appetite and relish for, and acceptance to, his words.

As well might a painter stand before the canvas without an artist's eye, or a lawyer exhaust a witness or convince a jury, minus forensic ability, or a doctor catalogue successful recoveries while not possessed of medical instincts, as a class-leader do his duty to a band of living men and women unless prepared by acquaintance with humanity on one hand, and divinity on the other, and the relation of each to each.

If he would see the dry bones symmetrize, beautify, organize, arise, move, march and conquer, he must contemplate their condition, carry it as a burden, bear it to Jehovah, prophesy to the winds, and above all he must be in the Spirit, as was the prophet, before he can become the quickening agency to electrify, edify, satisfy and multiply a class.

SUPEREROGATION.

While the securing of suitable provender for the Lord's flock, both in quality and quantity, cannot be overdone, it

is possible to make a mistake in the racks and boxes in which the provender is served. No leader is called upon to expend all his energies and ransack his ingenuity in multiplying temporary expedients, simply to make class-meetings interesting. In order to manage efficiently and sustain satisfactorily a Methodist class, must the leader make the class-room a museum, stored with latest appliances, both useful and ornamental? Must he search among and pilfer from the plans and schemes of Bible readers, evangelists and high-class variety men to make a class-room attractive? Must he have bandages for the limp, crutches for the lame, stimulants for the languid, rattles for the timid, visitation ambulances for the indifferent, revival hymn light-wood for the lukewarm, refrigerators for the feverish and excitable, patent anti-slip rubbers for backsliders, ice-creepers for the slip-shod, couches for the weary, and antidotes for colics, spasms, fits, jealousies, staggers, stinginess, St. Vitus' dance, and dances round and dances square; in a word, all mental moods and moral maladies, simply for the purpose of coaxing and luring members of the Methodist Church to attend class.

I do not think any person is called upon by either God, conscience or common sense, to exhaust all the treasure-stores of his intellect, energy, experience, spirituality and precious time in running a class, numbering on the roll, 45, average attendance, $5\frac{1}{8}$.

It is a mistake not to emphasize the word *ought*. This is the most tremendous factor in the problem. Methodist discipline has expunged the *must*, and for one I am not sorry. May we not now, nay, must we not emphasize the *ought*? Methodists *ought* to attend class. If they love God and their brethren, they will. They have enlisted under Christ's banner in that department of His great army that professes to be governed by John Wesley's rules, and this is one of them.

Leading, luring, coaxing, carrying is overdone, and a premium is put upon a system only calculated to develop pets, idlers and pigmies. Every preacher, leader and teacher in Methodism should say to every professed member of his church, *You ought to go*, and give their reasons why.

I heartily sympathize with a leader who is at his wits' end inventing rigs for carrying the tender lambs committed to his care ; but when I see a poor brother or sister laden down with a cargo of full-grown sheep, and crowding and adjusting them so as to make a place for a few pampered old goats who want a carriage to bear them to the heavenly fold, the sight no longer excites sympathy, but rather provokes ridicule. Coaxing is overdone.

OPENING.

It is a mistake to be indifferent as to the mode of opening. Never begin acting on the supposition that as a matter of course the fire will burn of necessity as the meeting progresses. The opening moments are the most important of the session. Carefully select your opening hymn, others will be suggested by the temper of the meeting. Carefully and studiously direct the opening prayer. Never mind "How the oil flows from vessel to vessel" or how the "horse rushes into the battle." The leader must remember that a week's flaws and failures have intervened since last meeting. The page of history may have been marred by a blot, or what is equally culpable, an unseemly blank ; or carelessly written chapters may have discouraged the writers. Surely now is the time when the pilgrims, having been cleansed, needeth not save to wash the feet. Surely this is the time when the leader should take the besom of unreserved and hearty confession and clear out all hindrances at the very door of the meeting. This done do not allow the members to spend the hour in resurrecting their sins. "If we confess our sins," etc., etc. If forgiven let them stay forgiven. They should never have been, and if God is willing to remember them no more forever, this is special reason why the offenders should not parade their offences. If your sins are lost in the sea, then cease sitting on the shore whistling them back again. If the clouds have been dispersed, do not spend your time trying to raise a fog, which you can surely do. It is a mistake to encourage recitals and details of occurrences and incidents that were forgiven years ago. There is nothing worth boasting about them, there is nothing specially entertaining in them, there is much to provoke shame and

counsel silence, and the key note of the testimony meeting should be not ourselves but like the Psalmist, "My soul shall make her boast in the Lord," etc.

Discourage formalities; the leader should shelve or calce his own stereotype plates if he has any. The experiences as related will suggest whether there should be a reply; exhortations may profitably be left till next week. To speak to all may be contrary to good judgment. It is a mistake not to speak to the point. Discourage fossilized and meaningless phrases, *e.g.* "Where I am and what I am," or "Love Him more and serve Him better," "All I have and all I am." It is a mistake to suffer these to pass without emphasis and explanation. To fully understand their force would mean either to live them or let them alone, and either result would correct their meaningless repetition. It is a mistake to allow the catechetical style to supersede the conversational. It is a mistake to crowd either the timid, the torpid, or the empty to testify. The timid will come to their speech in time, and all the sooner by being let alone. The torpid will show signs of life when the frost gets out; then kindle around them blazing devotional fires; while the empty will testify as soon as they have an experience to relate, and that is as soon as will be beneficial for others, or profitable for their own souls.

The benediction that attends spontaneousness will make it worth while to wait. Many a trembling mute since David's day could say, "While I was musing the fire burned, then spake I with my tongue."

It is a mistake to allow Brother Long to review his "well nigh unto forty years' experience in the divine life." It will not help the class to have them revisit the geography of Brother Hedgerow's or Father Woodland's conversion. These places have been located, surveyed and deserted by the class a hundred times. The class-mates are familiar with the lane, the trees, the grasses, the very ground on which they kneeled, yea, the stars that shone, the birds that sang, and the vision that appeared when the blessing came. The leader should spend a week laying a switch by which he could sidetrack these dear brethren, and drop them down into the realm of self-denial and self-sacrifice where last

week's successes and reverses, and yesterday's trials and triumphs will come to the front. The leader should encourage the relation of such experience as would in the main be an answer to the question, "How have I lived since I was here before?" What avails the correct sailings of twenty years ago, if the last week can only record driftings? The class-room should be as a mountain top, and the experience a scanning of the latest stages in the journey. Confine your class to the sacred enclosures of a week and you encourage the members to prepare, by reciting encouragement gained from successes, warnings from self-caused sorrows, and lessons of wisdom from mistakes. Of what use is it that the captain review his log-book of half a dozen years ago? He only needs to ascertain his present position. So the sailor on this great world sea, surrounded by dangerous shoals, eddies and currents, whose horizon is skirted with threatening tempest clouds, wants but to read the passing day, so as to measure his sea room and forecast the future.

It is a mistake to permit everlasting recitals of *self-condemnation*. If they are true, then they are sinful, and the remedy is found not in testimony but in penitence, petition and trust. If they are habit, then should they be discouraged, inasmuch as they fetter ambition, exhaust courage, weaken faith, becloud hope, and give birth to despondency. It is an injury to others, a detriment to the class, to have some members there deploring their chronic crookedness in such phrases as "I have my faults and my failures," "I have not done all I ought to do," "I beg an interest in your prayers;" when the leader is conscious that until the envious heart is crushed here, or the jealous eye is pulled out there, or the tameless tongue is imprisoned, or the pig-skin purse is made to open without squealing, that there can be no growth in grace; no heavenly joy here, nor joyful heaven hereafter. They are walking after the flesh, and hence the condemnation; they are among the tombs, and hence "the doleful sounds." It is both Pauline and Wesleyan to discourage these caricatures of Christian life, to urge these bitterns to leave such wildernesses; to walk after the Spirit and live in the Spirit and sing, "No condemnation now I dread."

DEEP RUTS.

It is a mistake to allow the carriage wheel of experience to run into grooves and ruts. Sister Cloud's weekly closet visions should long ago have been explained away; and sister Moonlight's miraculous dreams should long ago have been interpreted. Twenty years ago brother *Not-what-I-ought-to-be* should have been lifted out of the rut by some faithful leader asking him "what he ought to be, and how he thought he could be it, or when he was going to be it, or how he was going to escape perdition if he lived in such a self-condemned state." Brother *Want-to-do-more* would be greatly helped by an honest leader asking him "what he had done for God last week, and what he could do the coming week, and what right he had to belie the Almighty by saying that he enjoyed the favor of God when he was not doing what he knew he could do and should do." I am not in sympathy with the doctrine propounded by one speaker this afternoon, that a limited obedience to well-known commands would insure the persistent delinquent a welcome into the heavenly rest.

"BE SHORT, BROTHER!"

Speechmaking is out of place in a class-room. Lectures and sermonettes should be discouraged. When Mr. Continuity subsides, with an honest request that they give him an interest in their prayers, it would not be out of place to say, Yes, and a place in our patience also, brother. At the class-room door all hobby-riders should be made to dismount. Brevity will be sure to freeze them out. Commonplace platitudes should be discouraged. Affected sobriety, or affected jubilation, or affected anything else is an unpardonable but not uncommon mistake, and gives birth to telescope experiences.

"ON THE MOUNTAIN TOP."

It is a mistake to expect that every time you meet you ought to see your David's dancing before the Ark of the Lord. The time may be more profitably spent in discovering some Achan defaulter or burying some

covetous Ananias and deceitful Sapphira. The emotional should never be cultivated at the expense of the practical. Christians more readily lean towards the subjective than the objective side of religion. They pay more attention to frames and feelings than they do to moral claims and duties. It is a mistake always to ask them "How they feel?" Vary it by asking, "What have you done for the Lord?" The doing will always bring about a healthy feeling.

"TAKE YOUR BEARINGS."

It is a mistake to suppose that every member of your class has seen the rules of the Society, or that those who have seen them have read them; or that those who have read them understand them; or that those who understand them believe in them; or that those who believe in them urge them upon others; or that those who urge them upon others comply with their requirements themselves. Introduce the "rules of society" to your class, and correct a chronic mistake. I have known members grow too big for their church rules, and the head become so large that the doctrines were too narrow, and the toes become so "fantastic" and step so elastic as to despise discipline.

CLASSIFICATION.

The work of classification has gone to seed. In the Methodist Church to-day we have children's classes and young people's classes; boys' classes and girls' classes; young men's classes and young ladies' classes; old men's classes and old women's classes; classes known by the date and classes known by the leader; classes known by the day of the week, and classes known by the hour of the day. I have no hesitation in declaring it overdone. The variety growing out of age, sex, condition, position and composition, is lacking, and greater strain put upon the leader to make amends for its absence. On one occasion Christ held a testimony meeting. Though He had present medical doctors, tax-gatherers and fishermen, the cultured, the shrewd, and the rugged, yet He needed the experience and demeanor of a little child to complete His class and furnish an illustra-

tion. We have the same decalogue for all ages and conditions. The same ethical directions for old and young. The same plan of salvation for old and young. The same epistle for children, young men and fathers. Why not have the same class-meeting? Are old folks' meetings dry? why not correct the wrong by the introduction of youthful buoyancy and song. Are young people's testimony meetings plagued with monotony? introduce variety by opening the door to aged saints. I would have the class-room the meeting place for three generations. The more honest the experience of the sage, the more helpful it will be to the child, while the testimony so complex and profound as not to interest and instruct intelligent childhood, will prove of little benefit to those of riper years.

FURNISHINGS.

There is room for complaint in the matter of equipment; not that I would encourage unnecessary expense. Hymn-books are too frequently the only stock in hand. It is a mistake to lead a class and not make frequent and intelligent use of the Bible. I would not make the class-meeting a Bible-class, but I would make the Bible the gauge with which to measure experience, *e.g.*, let a subject full of Christian experience be announced; let Scripture passages bearing upon the theme be memorized by the members; then use these passages as sounding lines to measure the depth of the waters in which the individual members are sailing.

Cardinal doctrines should pass under review, and in the light of Scripture receive explanation and enforcement. That leader makes a tremendous mistake, and one that will result in bitter disappointment, who hopes to edify and build up a class of Christians, strong to labor and to resist, unless there be a solid framework of cardinal doctrines.

It is a mistake to kindle the emotional fire in the class-meeting and allow it to pass away in simple smoke and flame. A weekly awakening of the emotional without incorporating the glow in some form of service, is only an evil, and calculated to fill the Church with Christians noted only for the speed with which they can run from zero to

boiling heat and back again, like so many sheet iron stoves heated with shavings.

If a class be visited by the softening spirit that makes the mountain flow, it should at once be turned into a hot-bed for germinating benevolent enterprises on behalf of sick, destitute and suffering. It is an opportune time for devising the best means for carrying such enterprises into effect. For instance, when you see a wealthy man mellowed by the hallowing influences of praise and testimony; when you hear him declare that he is indebted to God for "what he is, and where he is;" when you see the briny tear flow down his cheeks as he "surveys the wondrous cross," or sings, "Were the whole realm of nature mine," etc., it is a mistake not to gather a few of those tears in the bottles of a contribution. You will either gain your object and secure substantial help for some needy cause, or you will dry the tear of that mourner in Zion, and in either case you shall have your reward.

When you hear the utterance of distress from one who in the light of a blessed influence has given vent to her feelings in such language as this, "I want to do more for my God, who has done so much for me," put her on the track of some wandering member or impenitent friend, and, if genuine, her "love will make her cheerful feet in swift obedience run."

ROLL CALL.

It is a mistake not to have at every session a class-book. This means a roll call every evening—I know there is nothing very inspiring in calling over a list of absentees. Only by this means can they be kept before the attention of the class. This will secure enquiry after them and prayer for them. There is a "state" column in your class-book, fill it. There is a "station" column, fill it. There is a "residence" column there, fill it and find it. There is an "envelope" and "quarterage" column there, fill it. There is a "Superannuated Ministers' Fund" column there, fill it. The greatest mistake you ever made is to regard financial references as detrimental to the best interests of your classes. The palmy and prosperous days of class-meetings were those in which

they were most loyal to their earliest characteristics, and where the purse was challenged to play as prominent a part as the tongue. When quarterage was the mode of financing, the most successful leaders, as well as the most thrifty and spiritual classes were those whose report was always on hand and accounts squared at quarter day. I often hear leaders complain that certain of their members do not speak in class, the columns in the book would indicate a like laxity in other respects. That member should "be labored with" whose nervousness, modesty or meanness will not permit him either to say, pay or pray. He will be a novelty in the great Assize who will be able to plead, "I knew nothing, hence I said nothing; I had nothing, hence I gave nothing; I wanted nothing, hence I asked nothing." The Judge may well say to such, "I gave to each man according to his several ability," and if you got nothing it was because you were nothing. You should have taken your place not among the Methodists, but among that sect that was known as "nothingarians."

CLOSING THE CLASS.

Unpunctuality in opening is a mistake, but unpunctuality in closing is a greater one. It is a mistake to close in a confessional mood, rather encourage the jubilant. Let the consecrative rather than the penitential prevail. The roll call will suggest subjects for the closing prayer. The encore for the musician is often called forth by his closing effort, so the attendance upon class next week will depend much on the close of this week's session. Close with such a shout that the echoes will be heard in the soul till you meet again.

Dear leaders, I have found much fault, but I could fill a dozen such papers as this with compliments and catalogues of good things done by you and rightly done. May the power and wisdom of the Most Holy One sustain and encourage you in your arduous, useful, but often discouraging task!

MR. ROBERT AWDE opened the discussion by a ten-minute address. He said:—

1. It is a mistake for a class-leader to go to his class without the preparation which meditation and prayer supply. The soul must be aflame with devotion, in touch with God, and in loving sympathy with man. Gal. ii. 20 should be his experience. Under this head we think the essentials are prayer, preparation, punctuality.

2. Another mistake is to manifest a lack of interest in his fellow-members. He must have an eye, and a cheerful recognition for each one, if possible, as they come in. A warm welcome, or a loving enquiry, personal or family, helps a member to feel comfortable. We therefore say be early, earnest, enthusiastic.

3. It is a mistake to choose hymns at random. I remember one such unfortunate choice, where the leader gave out a hymn, and after singing two verses we found ourselves singing a hymn for infant baptism. I can assure you this discovery did not help our devotions. We therefore urge you to select suitable salvation songs.

4. It is a mistake to have long rambling prayers. If two or more engage in prayer, repetition is unavoidable. The exercise becomes tedious and monotonous. Perfunctory, pointless prayers prevent persons praying.

5. It is a mistake to have any cast-iron system of conducting class. Voluntary testimonies are best, but there are sensitive, shrinking souls who are best helped by being asked to speak. Their temptation is, "Don't push yourself into prominence." But the spell that binds them is broken when the request is made. They are no longer at liberty to parley with the temptation to be silent. They rise to their duty and gladly declare their allegiance to Christ, and thus gain victory for the present and confidence for the future. Consecrated common sense will cautiously commend or correct this characteristic.

6. And failing to recognize worth in others, it is a mistake to do too much yourself; draw out talent by letting others lead the class or conduct on prayer-meeting occasions. Give all the liberty of choosing hymns, then do your best to bring out of the hymn chosen all there is in it. Allow all a chance.

7. Lack of faithfulness is a serious mistake. "We watch as they who must give an account," and must warn, admonish, reprove and, if necessary, rebuke; but the latter should never be done in the class. Seek a private interview, when a word fitly spoken in tenderness and it may be with tears, will seldom fail of good results. Let no soul be lulled into a state of fancied security, crying, "Peace, peace, when there is no peace." Do this and you will find that fruit follows faithfulness.

8. It is a mistake in a leader to allow himself in anything that may be a cause of stumbling, or rock of offence, such as smoking, chewing tobacco, tippling or frequenting bars for so-called business purposes. "Avoid it, pass by it, turn from it and pass away." Failure to meet business or monetary engagements, non-attendance at the regular means of grace, and especially the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, are all blemishes that mar and influence most unfavorably all anxious souls, as well as pain and wound fellow-members of the Church of Christ. Your habits hinder or help hundreds.

9. It is a mistake not to close class-meeting at the proper time. Many can spare one hour, very few two hours. After closing encourage the class to linger and talk together. Then trust truth, timely taught, to triumph.

REV. M. BENSON—Is it not a mistake for the class-leader to be absent from the regular weekly prayer-meeting for months together? Has it not a bad influence upon the members under his care? Is it not a mistake to divide the young people from the old? Should not both be in the same classes—the young learning from the more experienced and the aged helped and inspired by the enthusiasm of the young? One of the most successful classes in my church has in it the young of not more than seven or eight years and up to the aged father of fifty-five and sixty. This blending of youth and age in the class-room is good.

REV. DR. JOHNSTON—After this paper, what class-leader will not be able to sing, "The mistakes of my life have been many?" But a cartoon is not expected to be a true picture. The cartoonists always made Sir John Mac-

donald's nose larger than it really was. It was a leading article, a prominent feature, and they were able all the better to lay hold of it. So our essayist has found ample material for his lively sketch. A fatal mistake is tediousness—long hymns, long prayers, long experiences will kill any meeting. Another mistake is unpunctuality. The late R. I. Walker carried his business habits into all his church work. When first appointed leader, he was put in charge of a class whose members were in the habit of coming a quarter or half-hour after the appointed time. At the moment he commenced, sang a hymn, prayed, sang again, then stood up to tell his experience. At this stage a member stuck his head in at the door, and started back to see a man talking alone. "Come in, brother," said the leader, "we'll hear your experience and close the meeting." Just as they were about to pray and part, another dropped in, gave his testimony, and the meeting was over before the members had begun to gather. They were on time the next week. Though he always had a large class, he closed sharp at the end of the hour. A third mistake is for the leader to do all the work himself.

THE REV. DR. WITHROW recounted a method of conducting a class-meeting which he had twice observed in Louisville, Ky., and he had not been able to make up his mind whether it was a mistake in class-leading or not. It was in an old-fashioned Southern Methodist Church, one of the leading Methodist churches in the city. After each relation of experience, each member of the class got up and shook hands with every other member. That might appear like overdoing it, but the effect was sometimes exceedingly impressive. For instance: A timid young lad had just been brought into the kingdom; in faltering words he tried to tell his experience. Then his father, a veteran Christian, went up and threw his arms around the boy's neck and kissed him, and every member went up and shook his hand, with some word of loving sympathy and encouragement. The effect was thrilling.

REV. A. B. CHAMBERS, LL.B.—I should like to ask the essayist a question. He insists on brief prayers. How is he going to bring that about? Answer by Bro. Maxwell:

No prayer is too long that prevails with God. The old colored preacher when he heard a long-winded brother going on, asked, "Who's dat praying? Brudder Jones, quit dare, and let somebody better acquainted with the Lord talk."

JAMES F. KERR—I will not be amongst those who tell the same story ninety-nine times out of a hundred, though if it were a good story, I would rather hear it fifty-two times in the year, from these dear people of one idea, than not hear it at all, through their constant absence. I repeat the Lord's Prayer three hundred and sixty-five times in the year, and it never grows old. However, I shall break out on new lines. I would say that the Epworth League and Young People's Associations are not without their effect on the old-fashioned Methodist class-meeting. What is the attitude of the young people towards the old people is a question that should be asked in every church? The facts are that we now have young men's classes and boys' classes, young ladies' classes and girls' classes, so that it is rare that a young person comes to (what may now be called) the old people's class, which is thus deprived of the life and interest formerly enjoyed in this means of grace. The general prayer-meeting is also affected, and its influence weakened by the withdrawal of the young people to their own, and the testimonies, prayers and praises of young and old rarely mingle. Granting that the Epworth League is doing a grand and good work, is it not possible that the young people's meetings suffer equally for want of the counsel and experience of their older brethren and sisters? The result of this separation, in part at least, is, that the class-meeting is being superseded by doubtful methods, such as asking questions, reciting hymns, reading, singing and Bible readings, and our young people, in many instances, are being entertained or amused rather than built up by personal testimony. Mr. Wesley expresses the result when he says, "a faintness has come over our Society." Let the members, young and old, have as many other meetings as they wish, but let no man lay hands on the God-honored, historic Methodist class-meeting, to divert it from its original design of prayer, praise and testimony.

REV. DR. CARMAN—This refined classification may be.

growing into a mistake, but we must bear in mind the facts of the case. Twenty years ago pastors will remember the classes had very little harbor or help for young people just beginning the Christian life. Older people had their longer stories and their severer discipline, sometimes their dry and dull routine, till there was nothing attractive for the youth. And this feature of Church management became quite too common. I have myself seen old stagers with their failing and cracked voices actually singing the congregation, and especially the young, out of the Church. There was no doubt of their piety, but there was room for large suspicion of lack of prudence. A revulsion of feeling came, perhaps even a revolution, and it was felt in all the Churches. The demand was decisive that provision should be made for the young, and it took the form of Epworth League, Christian Endeavor and kindred associations. The pastors had long tried to meet this demand in the formation of young people's societies. Now possibly the older Christians have seen their mistake and are better prepared to feed the lambs. If so, it will be well for the Church, as young and old may the better come together in the class-meetings again; the old making the young wiser and solidier, and the young making the old livelier and younger. Such a change would be a mutual advantage and to the glory of God.

JOHN HOLMES—I do not agree with the essayist that we err by over attention. I think the error is on the side of inattention. I have never lost a member by over kindness. When one is feeble my hope to gain him is by untiring effort. I give myself as leader to the class, and when I descend from this spirit of consecration my labor is in vain. Another thought, we have developed the missionary idea in our class, and give each member a box marked a cent a day. The result is that nine or ten members have raised together \$27; and sisters, who could not have given five cents, have contributed \$4 or \$5.

WARRING KENNEDY—"In many things we offend all." I am conscious of very many mistakes as a leader, and sit here corrected. A leader should not encourage mock humility. In a class I once attended, an old man used to write bitter things against himself, and one day the leader thought to rub it in,

and told him they all knew he was a great sinner, when the old man took up his hat and left the class, saying, "I am just as good as any of you." He recalled a ludicrous mistake. When a young man he was appointed, with an old class leader, to conduct a prayer-meeting. The leader announced a hymn, and after the first verse they found that they were singing a hymn on the "Death of a Widow."

The chair here asked the question, "Is it a mistake to have a large class?"

ISAAC WILSON, Toronto Junction—I like a large class. Have always had one for fifty years. Find it easier to keep them together, and a better spirit prevails. I started, a little more than a year ago, a class of half a dozen which now numbers between fifty and sixty, with an average attendance between thirty and forty.

GEO. J. BLACKWELL—I consider it necessary to have a class large enough to create an interest and a warmth. I also believe in young and old meeting together, from the boy or girl of seven years, up to the veteran of seventy. When we reach heaven we shall find fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters all in the grand class-meeting together; why not have such gatherings here and let the class be a heaven on earth—a place of power and spiritual life? Less than two years ago, when I joined the Metropolitan Church, I opened a class in a small room with three members; to-day we have a membership of 90, with an average attendance of 65. We have no long stories, but short, live experiences, and the power and presence of God are felt in all our meetings. We vary the exercises, the members are on the lookout for constant ingathering from the ranks of the world. I believe in a large class, full of the power of the Spirit, and aflame for God and humanity.

JOHN MILLAR, Deputy Minister of Education, urged the formation of large classes which, he held, made the meetings more interesting than small ones. In small classes there was often a lack of that variety of experience which helped spiritual growth. It was a mistake to put younger members by themselves. Who of those present who listened to the experiences given by older persons when he was young, would not say he had been much benefited thereby?

Mr. Millar also spoke of the advantage to the class when some special topic of Christian life formed the subject of such meeting. In this way a leader could often avoid the vague style in which testimonies were frequently given, and members would go away with their minds fastened on some leading thought. It was not necessary for a leader to reply to each testimony given in a class, as time might be wasted with profitless remarks.

The hour of 9.10 having arrived, the chairman called for the topic :

CLASS-MEETING LITERATURE,

and the REV. W. GALBRAITH, Ph.D., presented the following paper :

The earliest literature on class-meetings is scattered through connexional papers, magazines and quarterlies, and is not now available for general use.

Book literature on class-meetings began about the middle of the present century. In 1850, an excellent little work was published in London, England, called "Fish, on Class-Meetings."

The following year, 1851, the Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States followed the example of their British brethren, and aimed at exceeding them in quantity, if not in quality. "The Class-Leaders' Manual," written by Mr. Keyes, was published in New York, and a "Treatise on Class-Meetings," by Rev. John Miley, D.D., was published in Cincinnati.

It is England's turn to speak again, and there appears, "Tabor, or the Class-Meeting," by Rev. W. M. Punshon ; an unpretentious work of fifty pages, but redolent from beginning to end with the sweet aroma of the Holy Spirit's heavenly influences. It is the first publication of the gifted and eloquent preacher, whose words of burning eloquence so frequently charmed and captivated the Christian congregations of two continents.

American Methodism had spoken in the East and in the West. In 1855, the time had come for the South to lift up its voice, and the Rev. L. Rosser, D.D., published in Richmond, Virginia, his work on "Class-Meetings."

British Methodism comes again to the front. Rev. John Bate, the man of extensive research and compilation, the author of "The Cyclopedia of Illustrations of Moral and Religious Truths," is the most comprehensive writer on the subject of class-meetings. He published, in 1868, "The Class-Leaders' Assistant." This is a very valuable book for every leader. It has 430 pages, and contains a wide range of topics carefully selected, and appropriate texts of Scripture adapted to every shade of religious experience. Facts and pithy sayings are interspersed through the whole volume, making it one of the best works for Christian edification that has ever been written. Every leader in Methodism ought to possess it. If the judicious directions and encouragements, doctrinal, experimental and practical, with which it abounds, were carried out by our leaders, all dulness and monotony would be excluded from our class-meetings, and a freshness and interest infused into them which would contribute largely toward the increased intelligence and spiritual edification of the whole membership of our Church. The popularity of this work is seen in the fact that it has already reached its third edition. Price, \$1.25.

In 1865, Mr. Bate wrote his work, entitled "Objections to the Methodist Class-Meeting Answered." This book of 69 pages is intended for the hearers and members of the Methodist Church. It furnishes abundant evidence that the objections to class-meeting a third of a century ago were exactly the same as they are to-day, and were equally destitute of foundation in reason, Scripture or Christian experience. Here are the principal objections :

1. You have no scriptural authority for the class-meeting.
2. Class-meeting is too much like the Romish confessional.
3. I will not meet in class while there are so many inconsistent members ; I am as good as most of them that do meet.
4. Can I not be a member in the Methodist Church without meeting in class ?
5. I do not see the advantages of the class-meeting.
6. I have attended class-meeting for years, but could not enjoy it, or derive much good from it.

7. I am not good enough to meet in class.

8. I fear to commence meeting in class lest I should not continue.

9. I cannot speak my religious experience in the class-meeting.

10. Class-meetings are too expensive.

The rest of the book is occupied with miscellaneous objections.

These objections are calmly, fairly and fully discussed, and an overwhelming weight of evidence brought to refute them. This I regard as the best work ever written to meet the common objections against class-meeting. Those who give his answers a fair, candid and intelligent reading, will, for very shame, cease to offer such futile excuses for the neglect of this invaluable means of grace. The latest and the largest work on this subject by Mr. Bate is "The Class-Leaders' Treasury and Christians' Directory," published in 1881. This is a work of 515 pages. It is divided into thirty-two chapters. Each chapter contains instructions and counsel for the leader; a most valuable collection of information for the class, including Scripture readings, texts with short suggestive notes, experiences and responses adapted to every shade of Christian experience and expressed in Bible phraseology. This work is very good and exceedingly comprehensive, but it is too expensive for general circulation. Price \$2.50.

Rev. George Allen, another member of the British Wesleyan Conference, in 1852, wrote a small work called "Our Class-Meetings," and Rev. Joseph Bush, published an eminently useful little book on "How to Keep our Members."

Coley's "Class-Meeting" is another clear and vigorous plea for this means of grace. "Class-Meetings in Relation to the Design and Success of Methodism," by Rev. S. W. Christophers, of the Wesleyan Conference, England, was published about a quarter of a century ago. It is an eminently interesting and valuable work, according to class-meetings their proper place in the Christian Church, and recognizing them as one of the most important factors in the rapid growth and immense spiritual power of Methodism.

The price of this book was \$1, with discount of twenty per cent. to preachers and leaders. I think it is now out of print.

When our leaders want inspiration from a worthy example of faithfulness and success, let them read the "Life of Father Reeves," the saintly and efficient class-leader. When our leaders and people want recreation and instruction combined, let them read "Daniel Quorm," by Rev. Mark Guy Pearce, and the twelfth and fortieth chapters of "Nestleton Magna," written by J. Jackson Wray.

These two chapters give an account of the quaint but consecrated Adam Oliver, in the "Methodist Confessional," and make him the conspicuous figure in an "Episode in a Methodist Love-Feast."

When they want the imagination gratified by harmless speculations in regard to the future, let them read "The Great Love-Feast in Heaven," by a Methodist minister. Rev. John Atkinson, of the Methodist Episcopal Church, United States, some years ago published a work of considerable magnitude and still greater merit, called "The Class-Leader."

In 1875, an abridged edition of this book was published by our Methodist Book Room, of this city. It omits a preliminary chapter and condenses the others, without in the least impairing the value of the work. In this it has followed the example of John Wesley, and reduced to practice the adage, "Brevity is the golden rule of literature." No honest leader can read and digest this book without being a better man, and in every respect vastly better qualified for his office. If all our leaders were to carry into practice its wise suggestions and principles, thousands of precious souls would be saved every year from backsliding, the Church would have riper Christians, and heaven would bestow more ample rewards. It ought to be in the hands of every leader. It contains 172 pages, and can be obtained from the Book Room for the nominal sum of twenty-five cents. Another work that should not be overlooked in this connection, is a small pamphlet written in 1882 by the Rev. J. A. Chapman, M.A., one of the ministers of the Toronto Conference, called "The Class-Meeting; its Scriptural Authority and

Practical Value." It contains fifteen pages, and is sold at the Book Room for ten cents.

The names of a few small works may be given without further criticism on their merit than to say that they are all good, and will well repay persual. They are as follows: "Our Class-Meetings; their Origin and Organization," by an Anonymous Author; "Class-Meeting and their Improvement," by Rev. L. H. Wiseman, M.A.; "Our Class-Meetings; their Scriptural Authority," by Rev. John Bond; "The Methodist Class-Meeting calmly considered; a word to Objectors, Waverers and Members," by E. Augustus Hyde; "Absence from Class," Anonymous. These small works cost from five to ten cents.

The last work I shall notice is a volume entitled, "The Class-Meeting; Its Value to the Church, and Suggestions for Increasing its Efficiency and Attractiveness," by Rev. W. H. Thompson, Rev. Simpson Johnson and Rev. Edward Smith, published in London, England, in 1889.

Two laymen who were convinced that the well-being of Methodism is bound up in the class-meeting, offered £50 in prizes for the three best essays on the subject, £25, £15 and £10. The work now under consideration is composed of the three prize essays, selected out of a total number of 203. The first essay is a "Defence and a Plea for the Class-Meeting." The second is, "The Value of the Class-Meeting to the Church," and the third, "Is the Class-Meeting Obsolete or Essential? Which?" To these three essays is added a supplement containing most valuable suggestions to both leaders and members, topics, Bible-readings, etc., and is a rich treasury of Christian thought and practical hints, which if faithfully followed, would abolish stale, formal class-meetings, and convert every class-room into a vestibule of Heaven. This book ought to be in every Methodist home. It can be obtained at the Book-Room for 35 cents, and I have the pledge from our Book-Steward that he will give all leaders a discount of 20 per cent. on any of these books not marked net.

If our wealthy laymen would place at the disposal of our Book Steward one thousand or two thousand dollars, for the distribution of the best class-meeting literature among

the leaders, who have not the means to provide themselves with the same, I am sure it would be one of the very best uses to which their abundant means could be applied, and would result in the increased spirituality, efficiency and power of the Church.

The works that I would most highly commend are these :
"The Class-Leaders' Assistant," by John Bate ; "Objections to the Methodist Class-Meeting Answered," by same author ; "The Class-Leader," by John Atkinson ; "The Class-Meeting : Its Value to the Church," by Messrs. Thompson, Johnson and Smith.

SECOND DAY.

TUESDAY, *November 3rd, 1891.*

The Conference assembled at 2 p.m., in the Metropolitan school-room.

A half-hour's fellowship meeting was held, led by J. R. James, who said the Lord's Prayer, consisting of forty words, can be repeated in less than a minute, and if each one will put his experience in forty words, we shall have a great many witnesses.

A large number bore testimony to the value and blessedness of the class-meeting.

At 2.30 p.m., the chair was taken by Dr. Maclaren, who at once called up the subject for consideration, namely :

THE MODEL CLASS-LEADER.

REV. J. EDWARD STARR said :—In attempting to give you some idea of the model class-leader, I ought, at the outset, perhaps, to say that I have as yet to find him. Doubtless he exists, and the chairman of this Convention may possibly have come across him. Indeed, there may be people present who imagine that they have found him, that he is sitting just in front of the backs of the seats against which they are leaning ! But I confess I have not been so

fortunate in my experience as to come across him. The trouble is, the conditions have not been favorable to his development. Though grander soil than our Methodism cannot be found in which to produce him, as a Church, we have been neglecting his cultivation. Never will I forget the leader of the class, to whose care I was committed on my conversion. The wonder is he did not make me an infidel. Boy though I was, I soon knew his experience by heart, and also his prayers. Then the prayer over, he would go from one member of the class to the other, holding whispered consultations with them. Certainly a leader of that style is not the model class-leader, he is the *noodle* class-leader; and the noodle class-leader is not calculated to turn out model class-leaders. In other words, though now and then there may be discovered a model class-leader, because, like Topsy, he "just growed," you cannot expect model class-leaders where there has been no attempt to produce them. But in this respect we have been doing nothing as a Church; just as we have been neglecting the cultivation of the local preacher, so have we been neglecting the cultivation of the class-leader. Wiser are the children of the world in this particular, than are the children of Light. Under our Public School system the teacher is not regarded as properly qualified to teach until he has been taught how to teach, and so we have our teachers' conventions, our institutes and our model and normal schools. So, if we are to produce model class-leaders, we must have our church institutes, our normal classes, and our conventions, and this Convention cannot be other than a success, if it prove a stepping stone in that direction.

Now, assuming that we have the machinery for producing the model class-leader, what will be his "make-up?" Let me try to "wire together" his skeleton. What shall be the pedestal on which we shall place him? Unhesitatingly, I say, *personal piety*—a piety resting upon the foundation which no man can lay other than is laid, Jesus Christ. In that case, the education of his head will not have congealed his heart, and he will intrude upon his class no "liberal notions," feeling that he dare not peril their spiritual interests by dealings in "perphaps's" and speculations.

Nor will he make the mistake of supposing that piety is sanctimoniousness, or that holiness is the exhibition of vindictiveness, or vituperation. He will lead in piety—leading his class to higher and yet higher peaks in the Divine life.

But then he must have something with which to maintain himself on the pedestal of personal piety. So, notwithstanding that the Psalmist tells us “the Lord has no pleasure in the legs of a man,” we must find his supports, his feet and his limbs. As for his feet they will prove an aid to his piety if they carry him to the homes and the hearts of his class, and all the better for himself and his class if he can induce them to use their feet—to do which there is perhaps no better plan than to have a committee of three to look after lagging and absent members. One member of the committee to drop out every month and have his place taken by another—while better limbs there cannot be found with which to support his piety than his Bible, and the teaching of his past. The teachings of his past, I say; not living in the past. Of “living in the past” there is enough and to spare—going back to poke at the dead embers of old camping grounds which ought long ago to have been abandoned. Saying the same old prayers and repeating the same stale experiences which ought long ago to have been discarded as are our old clothes. But if instead of “living in the past,” he will allow the past to teach him—bringing to his mind the help and grace afforded him by God in great crises of his life—*that*, with the knowledge which, with the assistance of the Holy Spirit, he will get from his Bible, will give him faith in God, without which no man can succeed as a class-leader.

This model class-leader also needs a *body*—the body of sound doctrine. Without that he cannot build men and women into Christ. The need in these days is for brawny Christians—Christians who have *experience* and have strong conviction founded upon strong reasons. But you cannot produce them by keeping them on a milk diet and prolonging the baby-state into manhood and womanhood. No! They must have *meat*, and the model class-leader will see that his class has it, and has it so that it will be eatable

and easily digested. The meat of sound doctrine makes muscle—the muscle by means of which we climb into the higher and purer spiritual atmosphere.

Not only so, but he will have a head on him—a head filled with tact, prudence and common sense—a head which devises against monotony in the class, and dulness and insipidity. Sometimes he will “draw out” his members, stopping them in the narration of their experience if it be too general, finding out just what the difficulty is and prescribing the specific. The conversational style, rather than the hortatory, will be the aim of the model class-leader. If there be, as it is said there is, a “pulpit twang” among preachers, certainly among members of the Church there is the “class-meeting twang.” In no place in the world do people talk so unnaturally as in the love-feast and class-meeting—a habit which has made the class-meeting unpopular; and the model class-leader, while aiming at the conversational style himself, will try to cultivate it among his members.

Besides in his body he will have an heart—an heart with two lobes. On the one side *sympathy*—sympathy with the sorrow-stricken and with the erring; and on the other, *liberality*. Giving will be a privilege to him. “Let us have a collection” just as inspiring as “Let us sing;” and never for a moment will he approach the likeness of a class-leader whom I had recently pointed out to me as a curiosity, and who during the ten years he had held his position, not only never contributed anything himself to the current funds, but had also influenced thirty-one members of his class to do the same—his conduct evidencing that in the place where most men carry their hearts, he carried a gall-stone.

Now into that skeleton, hastily “wired together,” put a real—a manly man. Let him be “clothed upon” with the power of God, and you have the model class-leader.

MR. W. H. PEARSON said :

Mr. Chairman and Fellow-Workers,—I have not written what I have to say in opening this discussion, as it was impossible for me to know what would be said by the writer of

the paper just read, and I might in all probability, have gone over the same ground. As it is, Mr. Starr has enlarged upon several of the points which I had specially thought out and which it will not now be necessary for me to touch upon.

Referring first to what are really the most important qualifications of a class leader—the spiritual and moral—I would say emphatically, a class-leader must be a spiritual man, for his work is mainly spiritual. Not only so, but he must be a man of more than ordinarily high spiritual attainment, as it is his duty to lead the members of his class up to a higher spiritual plane, and unless he has risen higher in the spiritual life than they have, he cannot do this. Whatever other qualifications he may have, this spiritual one is absolutely essential, and it is impossible too earnestly to urge its importance; nor should he as a leader engage in any vocation or recreation or attend any place of amusement, where he cannot consistently say to his members, "Follow me."

Again, of all men engaged in Christian work, none more directly need God's teaching than the class-leader. He can never tell to what experience he may be called upon to listen, and he is never qualified to give proper instruction unless under the influence of the Holy Spirit. This teaching, God has most directly promised him, and it is the privilege of every leader to expect the fulfilment of this promise, whenever he meets his class.

His piety should be of an aggressive character. No true leader is ever satisfied with simply holding his own, or to act merely on the defensive. In fact, if he has not aggressive piety, it will never be possible for him to hold his own and make good the wear and tear of his class. Not only should he seek to bring others into the fold himself, but he should influence his members to do the same. No class can be a truly successful class, if it is not a working one.

As to natural and mental qualifications, a class leader should be possessed of considerable personal magnetism, by which he can put himself "in touch" with his members. He should be a man of energy, life and snap. He should

be sympathetic. A man of cold and lymphatic temperament cannot make a model class-leader. He should have sound judgment, penetration, discrimination and tact, for all these qualities will be frequently called into play. A class-leader is essentially a teacher, and therefore he should be apt to teach, and preferably, though not necessarily, he should be able to sing. Good, hearty, lively singing is a valuable aid to the success of any class, and in many respects it is always an advantage for a leader not to have to depend upon someone else to lead in song.

With regard to acquired qualifications, a class-leader should be well versed in Scripture, and a constant Bible student. The Bible is his text-book, and he should be able to bring forth from this treasury, things new and old. It is the "Sword of the Spirit," which he should be able to wield with effect. It is certainly a grand thing for a leader to be always able to support his injunctions and exhortations with a "Thus saith the Lord." No man can be an efficient leader without this qualification.

In general, he should take a personal interest in each member, and be truly solicitous regarding their welfare, both temporally and spiritually, and be willing at all times to aid them by his advice, or materially, to the best of his ability. Even a little kindness and attention shown, often goes a long way toward preparing them to receive his instructions. He should become personally acquainted with the members, that he may be better able to suit his advice to their needs.

As an under-shepherd to the pastor of the Church, he must shepherd his members. No true class-leader will allow any member to be absent for any length of time without endeavoring in some way to ascertain the cause. He should, when practicable, visit them. He will thereby often find out many circumstances which will help him to give more appropriate advice than he would otherwise be able to do. As to how often he should visit is a matter which circumstances must determine. It may not be proper or desirable, in some instances, for him to visit. In which case, a kind note will sometimes answer the purpose. When unable to

visit himself, he should employ members of his class to do so. This will be a benefit to them, as well as to those visited.

GEORGE SMITH—There is one aspect of the class which has not yet been developed—it enables the soul to find a spiritual home. I am the descendant of one appointed on the plan by John Wesley himself, and there has been a George Smith on the local preachers' plan ever since. I remember well after having crossed the ocean, I reached this city and went to the old Richmond Street Church and sat down in a class-meeting, and at once felt perfectly at home. Three thousand miles away from my native land, among strangers, yet I had the feeling of brotherhood and realized the badge of discipleship. I believe that this obtains to a higher degree among us than in any other Church.

REV. M. BENSON thought the model class-leader was : (1) A well-read man ; (2) a devoted, enthusiastic man ; (3) a self-sacrificing man.

DR. CARMAN had the idea that model preachers and model leaders abounded ; what we needed was the ideal preacher, and the ideal leader. We must rise up to a higher level than the ordinary.

William Hamilton, Richard Brown, Inspector Archibald, Revs. T. Manning and George K. Adams, also took part in the discussion.

BENJAMIN WESTWOOD—I am convinced that it is a good plan to come to our class-meetings prepared with a subject for thought and meditation. Our ministers study and make due preparation for the pulpit, and so should the class-leader, before going to his class, not only prepare himself by prayer and consecration to God for the responsible work which lies before him, but also by selecting some appropriate subject, such as a portion of God's Word, or one of the doctrines of our religion, or any subject that can be made practicable and profitable to the class. I have found this method to work well in my experience as a class-leader. It has seemed to give life and stimulus to the meeting and bring out much Christian testimony, as well as give food for meditation during the week.

WILLIAM BOWMAN, of London--Rev. Mr. Starr has not finished the figure of his model class-leader. He had remarked that he needed above other things a head, or good common sense. I think it very essential that he should have *eyes and use them*. To keep live and fresh he needed to be ever on the lookout for illustrations. It was in this way the celebrated Landseer, the animal painter, gained his character for being *natural*, all his pictures having some striking *point* brought out. After his death, the secret of his success revealed itself, for in his studio was found heaps of scraps of paper, on each some sketch, some special feature of animal attitude, etc. His custom had been to have pencil and paper handy when out, and if he saw anything worthy of notice he sketched it roughly for future use. So, if a class-leader would excel and be natural, he must keep gathering material to illustrate special phases of religious and home life. This would keep him out of *old ruts*. This was a secret of the success of many of the great leaders of Methodism, whose biographies are with us.

REV. A. M. PHILLIPS, B.D.—I am in favor of the class-meeting as a means of grace, that is, as a means of securing the knowledge and favor of God. It is said that the Church has used the class-meeting to provide a means of Christian fellowship. It should be remembered, however, that "fellowship," as used in the Acts of the Apostles, did not refer to "the communion of saints," as secured by our ordinary experience or testimony meeting, but to the intimate bond of brotherhood which united the early Christians. Its special reference was to the having "all things common." It is the communion of joint participation, the fellowship of intimate intercourse. A study of the Epistles reveals the fact that this fellowship was promoted in a social means of grace for mutual edification, by exhorting, teaching, admonishing, comforting, confessing, singing and prayer, but all "unto the building up of the body in love." Fellowship is an effect rather than a cause, and stands for brotherly love in the highest and truest Christian sense; from the standpoint of the Apostolic Church it is the product of edifying one another, the building of each other up.

If, as the apostle exhorts in connection with these inner social church services, "all things be done to edifying," and we are to "build each other up," there is need of preparation upon the part of not only leader but members. We need to carry out the suggestion of Mr. Starr and provide a means for training class-leaders. We should have more class-meeting literature, not only the kind referred to by Dr. Galbraith, but periodical literature. Our own publications should have departments in which could be found suggestions for classes, hints to leaders, etc., etc. My experience justifies me in saying that prayer and meditation are not a sufficient preparation for the model leader. He should have a subject or topic on practical religious life and experience for conversation in the class-room, which he has previously announced to the members; both he and they should think all round it and through it in connection with such Bible truths as would apply to it, and thus come prepared to edify or build up. If the class-meeting is to be reduced to a mere relation of experience in a general way, or the bearing of testimony ordinarily, then the meetings must become monotonous, and cannot result in that true promotion of spiritual emotion which depends upon a growing knowledge of the truth. Have experience and the relation of experience, but let it be the product of making saints in this world rather than a means of preparing some for a canonization in a life hereafter.

REV. G. J. BISHOP took issue with Mr. Phillips and deprecated the tenor of his remarks. They must exalt Christian experience. They had other means of grace, helpful to men in their Christian character, but they also had, what other churches had not, the class-meeting, to develop spiritual life. It was a great mistake to turn the class-meeting into a Bible-class. Let us hold hard and fast to the development of strong, definite Christian life and experience. He did not believe it practicable or effective for a class-leader to go to meeting with a subject prepared beforehand.

The hour of 3.30 having arrived, the REV. J. V. SMITH introduced the next subject :

CLASSES FOR THE YOUNG.

It is no longer an open question as to whether children can know their sins forgiven. That question is settled, and settled in the way it ought to be. The conversion of the child is an essential part of the creed of Christendom to-day. There is a great deal of ideality floating around the Church and the world, some of it very good and some of it intensely visionary ; but there can be no such thing as an ideal Church without the best of attention being directed on the part of the Church towards fostering and feeding the young. A Church which fails to recognize and develop the magnificent possibilities wrapt up in the rising generation, is, to say the least, a *blind* Church—blind to its noblest mission on the one hand, and its most fruitful field of religious endeavor on the other.

Among the many shortcomings—the inexcusable blunders which have marred the record of the Christian era—none stands out more conspicuous and admonitory than the ages upon ages of utter disregard, and almost heathenish neglect, which has characterized the attitude of the Christian Church touching the spiritual wellbeing of the young. Had the Church of Christ devoted one-tenth of the time and energy towards securing and promoting the religious growth of the children, which it has done in the discussion of abstract questions of doctrine and in the splitting of theological hairs—neither of which are profitable to edification or godliness—we would have been ten times nearer the millennium than what we are to-day.

We are told that “water spilt upon the ground cannot be gathered up again,” a simple illustration designed to teach the solemn truth that lost opportunities can never be recalled ; but there are some serious lessons to learn from this great blunder of the centuries, and we shall certainly be more guilty than our fathers if we fail to give these lessons some practical recognition in our Christian life.

The boys and the girls are with us and always will be.

God bless them ! Not a Church in this city but has hundreds of them. Some, I understand, count them by the thousand. They were never a more important factor in society than what they are now. Intellectually and religiously they are well to the front. Our common school system is giving them a mental training calculated to fit them for important positions of trust and responsibility. The clock of Divine Providence is striking the hour of supremest opportunity to the Church of God so far as the children are concerned. The clanging bells of Time are summoning the rank and file of God's consecrated hosts into the most fruitful field of Christian activity that can be found on this side of heaven. In view of these facts, dare any Church call itself Christian and yet neglect to marshal its energies and agencies towards the nurture and development of the Christ-life among the young ?

Looking over the field everything is favorable to the worker. The religion of the New Testament is wondrously adapted to the pure and generous impulses of the child. No heart responds so quickly and so truly to the "Old, old story." That being the case, surely we are fools and blind if we let the main chance slip through our fingers and allow our sleepless Adversary to rob the Church of her fairest heritage. If I read the signs of the times aright, if I correctly interpret the temper and spirit of the age, I think I may safely say that the Devil has played that game more successfully in the past than he is likely to do in the future. In the evening of the nineteenth century the Christian Church is surely waking up to the fact that the great victories of the Cross must and will be won in the bright young morning of life, rather than in the sultry noon or cloudy evening. The bugle blast of victory blown from the lips of childhood and youth means the death-knell of the Devil and his works, so far as this world is concerned. The gates of the millennium will be thrown open by the consecrated childhood of Christian lands. That, however, belongs to the "good time coming."

The crucial question of the present hour is, How can we best conserve and develop the religious life of our children ?

What agencies are best calculated to reach this desirable end?

Religious instruction, by precept and example at home, can never take a secondary place. The far-reaching influence of a godly household can never be measured. During the plastic period of early life, all other agencies must necessarily be supplementary to that. But admitting all this and a great deal more which cannot be particularized here and now, nevertheless, I hold we have done well in organizing junior society classes specially adapted for the young. Now, I am very well aware that some very good people have their doubts about the advisability of separating our boys and girls from the adult classes and organizing them into classes by themselves. Some have more than doubts, they have positive convictions that it is not the most excellent way. They reason with a good deal of force and fairness, that the experiences of older Christians are invaluable to the young, being calculated to give them a deeper insight into Christian life, and a broader outlook of spiritual attainment. It is also held with equal reason that the family aspect of our class-meetings can only be realized and enjoyed by having the young lambs of the flock meeting in weekly fellowship with the fathers and mothers of our Israel. Granting certain conditions it would be difficult to answer these objections, or to defend the action of organizing junior society classes. But the conditions are not always present, indeed it is the exception rather than the rule. That being the case there is a good deal to be said which justifies, and more than justifies, the Church in gathering the young together in bands or classes for Christian fellowship and religious instruction.

I trust you will not accuse me of bringing a railing accusation against a large body of godly, self-sacrificing men and women, whom I esteem, honor and love for their work's sake, but from my knowledge and observation of classes and leaders, I give it as my honest conviction that a large proportion of leaders are not calculated to draw out the sympathies and religious enthusiasm of the young. Now, this is no reflection upon the leader, for the simple reason that

the men and women are few and far between who have the rare talent of talking to children in a class-meeting with interest and profit. In the management and direction of a class of adults, a leader may be a pronounced success, but that same leader when dealing with boys and girls of ten or twelve years of age, may be just as conspicuous a failure. Just as there are lots of preachers who can preach with power and profit to ordinary congregations, but are altogether at sea when they come to address the children.

However, I am not sure whether a good deal of what is given in the way of experience in adult classes will be very helpful and inspiring to Christians of tender years. It is a well-known fact that in nearly all our classes there are some who, from constitutional ailments or untoward circumstances, are very much disposed to take morbid, gloomy views of life and duty, and they generally express themselves along that line. My opinion is, the less our young Christians hear of that sort of thing the better. On the contrary let us do our best to help them to realize the truth and beauty of what we often sing :

“ The men of grace have found
Glory begun below,” etc.

It is also of the utmost importance that everything connected with junior classes be thoroughly in touch with young life in order to bring out and strengthen what is best within them. As already indicated, the leader must have a special fitness for the work. Such leaders are not over-numerous in any of our churches. In many cases it may be exceedingly difficult to find the right man or woman. If such a person cannot be found I have not much hope for the class. A prosy, common-place leader may be able to struggle along with an adult class of men and women who have been years on the way to heaven, but such a leader would soon be left “high and dry” if he undertook the religious oversight of thirty or forty young people. No pastor has a more difficult or serious duty to perform, than in the appointment of a leader to a class of that kind. More than at any other time he is called upon to use his

sanctified common sense. Failing to do so he will not only make a serious blunder, but jeopardize the religious life and growth of the entire class.

The question is often asked: What kind of a man is best fitted for the work? What are the essential qualities that ought to predominate in his character? It is easier to ask than answer such questions, but proceeding upon what experience and observation has taught me, I would say: He must of all be a man whose piety and Christian integrity cannot for a moment be called into question. Young people have sharp eyes and can quickly detect a weakness or flaw in Christian character. He must be a man of strong common sense, for he will often be called upon to express an opinion on questions of great practical importance, and his opinion may have a far-reaching influence upon the characters of those to whom he ministers.

He must have a keen appreciation of the dangers and temptations peculiar to early life, so that his admonitions, warnings and encouragements may all tend to the most satisfactory results. He must be able to present clear, clean-cut statements of what Christ requires from those who profess to be His followers. If there be any time when Christian ethics and dogmatic theology can be taught to advantage, it is to young people of from ten to fifteen years of age. He must be prompt, bright and wide-awake in conducting the meetings from week to week. Such a thing as an old rut must not come within a hundred miles of the class-room.

By personal visitation at their homes, by a hearty greeting on the street, by a warm shake of the hand, by unflagging interest in everything which concerns their temporal and spiritual well-being, he must keep himself in touch with his class from week to week, from January to December, from youth to maturity, and in doing this he will shape and mould many a noble life and win for himself the unstinted gratitude of all concerned. Give us men and women of this kind, and I for one, will not hesitate to say that the labors of such leaders through junior society classes will produce better results than can be attained in any other way.

Classes for the young must, in the very nature of the case, differ in complexion and methods from adult classes, just as a boy differs in speech and deportment from a man ; and because young people *do* differ from adults whether of forty or four-score, I maintain that their religious nurture and growth can be best secured by the organization of classes for the young under the conditions already stated.

Gathered together by themselves, under the wise direction and loving oversight of a judicious leader, they will not only be more likely to join heartily in the exercises of the service, but their youthful enthusiasm, when properly directed, will run out in many a channel of Christian activity, and help the Church in a hundred ways to realize what the prophets of old have spoken, when "the little one shall become a thousand, and the small one a strong nation."

The question of the religious care of the young is to me a very serious one, for if they are not cared for when they are young, we'll not have them to care for when they are old. Our golden opportunity will have fled and gone. I am not here to ride a hobby or champion a fad. I am not here to say that our children cannot be nurtured and fed in the ordinary classes of the Church. In a number of classes I know they can, they have been, and still are led to the green pastures and the still waters. But I know this also, that where junior classes have been wisely managed, they have been among the most fruitful and blessed agencies for good with which I have had anything to do. Personally, I should feel that I was running squarely against the clear leading of Divine Providence if I failed in my work as a Christian minister to take advantage of an agency which has been crowned with such marked tokens of Divine approval in the past. These are the facts, and facts are stubborn things. It might be a comparatively easy task for any of you to batter down the merely argumentative side of this paper, but not so with the facts. A fact cannot be cannonaded or bombarded out of existence. After your most destructive broadsides have been levelled against it, it still remains ; and while it remains I am bound to respect its presence and abide by the lessons it teaches.

I am neither a prophet nor the son of a prophet, but I venture to affirm that the Church which is most active and successful in laying hold of the boys and girls, and training them for the Lord, will be the most powerful Church in the next generation. It is a matter of secondary importance to me *how* this work is done, so long as it *is* done. Whether through junior classes, adult classes, or any kind of a class, let us see to it that this work does not go by default.

Who can refrain from thinking that if the moral and spiritual forces locked up in the lives of these converted boys are properly nurtured and directed, what glorious possibilities may lie within the reach of many of them? May there not be numbers among the ranks of our converted youths who, if their latent powers of thought and action are properly developed, may yet rank with the noblest men the Church of God has ever known!

God alone can tell, but this we do know, that the heroes of the Church who will push on the work of God when the twentieth century has begun its race, are somewhere among the young people of the Church to-day.

From them will arise the Joshua's of the future, who will lead the Israel of God into the possession of the world. If we are faithful in this most solemn trust committed to us to-day, unnumbered blessings will rest upon our memory long after we have ceased to work and live.

RICHARD BROWN, in opening the discussion, offered some most valuable remarks, of which we give merely the heads.

Having read Psalm lxxviii., 5-7, he said: I am not going to preach a sermon, read a paper or give a lengthy address, but simply give expression to a few thoughts on the young in relation to our classes.

Catechumens! What does it mean? They were candidates for baptism in the ancient Church, who were placed under a system of instruction. Sometimes the term is employed to designate the children of the Church, especially those who are studying the catechism and elementary doctrines preparatory to being received into full membership.

The Discipline reads, "As far as practicable it shall be

the duty of every superintendent to obtain the names of the children of his congregation to form them into Catechumen classes for the purpose of giving them religious instruction." In this work much depends on the leader. He must be bright, cheerful, sympathetic, not doleful, not necessarily young, but in every way suitable. A warm-hearted, earnest, loving lady might do best.

By virtue of their baptism these young people belong to the Church. Some say they are members of the Church. They may be in a way, but they are not full members. Such, perhaps, they cannot be without their own consent.

"Catechumen classes composed of children under ten or twelve years, for the study of the catechism and receiving religious instruction."

The catechism does not receive that attention in our day as in former times. While nothing can be said against the international system of lessons, yet it in a measure interferes with the study of the catechism. There is not the time there should be given to the study of the catechism, and these classes would be just the place for that study.

As the children grow up in knowledge and greater responsibility, they should be placed with the regular classes and not formed into separate classes by themselves.

We want to have the children of our own people in direct membership with us.

Bringing together the experience, mellowness, wisdom and ripeness of age, with the freshness, fire, enthusiasm, the eagerness and snap of youth. It will be a blessing to both, a blending of thought and ideas.

Should not the youngest lambs be allowed the freedom of the same pasture with the rest of the flock?

Class-meeting is peculiarly helpful to young converts. It surrounds the young in cities and elsewhere with safeguards which experience has shown to be of the greatest value. They give healthful associations as well as the sympathy, aid and assistance of friends.

Young people coming to the city should be specially looked after. When given letters they should be strongly

recommended to associate themselves with the people of God.

Parents should interest their children to accompany them to class, just as a father brought his three little boys with him to my class, saying, they preferred coming with him.

There may be times when for special reasons it may be desirable to have separate classes for young men or young women.

Ladies' classes are obliged to meet during the day because women cannot well get out in the evening or Sunday mornings, and children cannot get out during the day.

Before the change in the Children's Fund there was a disposition not to return the children as members, owing to the circuit being taxed so much per member, but happily that is no longer an excuse, so that there need be no restrictions to children meeting in class.

Encourage them to come—the earlier the better. “Except ye become as little children ye shall not enter into the kingdom of Heaven.”

The boys and girls of to-day will become the men and women of the future.

There was considerable divergence of views on this question as shown in the observations of Dr. Galbraith, Rev. J. F. German, Rev. T. Manning, Warring Kennedy and others.

MR. R. AWDE said that in Wesley Church there were two hundred scholars meeting in class just after the Sunday-school, with female leaders.

DR. CARMAN believed in children's classes and female leaders for them.

W. H. PEARSON—I should like to give you an illustration to show that classes composed entirely of young people can be conducted with much advantage. To do this it will be necessary to give my own experience, and you will therefore please pardon personal references. Over thirty-six years since, it pleased God to honor me in making me the humble instrument in the conversion of about one hundred children and young people of the Richmond Street Methodist Sab-

bath School, in which I was then a teacher. This work of God was, in some respects, one of the most remarkable and powerful that I have ever witnessed, both as to its extent, considering the proportion of conversions to the number in the school, and the depth of the convictions produced in the hearts and minds of the young. So deeply affecting were the scenes I then witnessed, that I cannot even at this distance of time refer to the matter without experiencing a feeling of deep emotion. Bro. Finch, who is here, and Bro. Jennings, who were both at the time teachers in the school, can bear testimony to the correctness of what I now tell you. Two of Bro. Finch's own boys were amongst the saved. The question then arose, "How are these young converts to be cared for?" After consultation, it was decided to form them into separate classes, one for boys and one for girls. At the urgent request of the pastor, the Rev. John Borland, I consented to take charge of the class for the boys. A large class for girls was also formed, and given in charge of a lady, and continued in existence until some of those who then joined it grew up to womanhood.

My first work was to call upon the parents of all of the boys whose names I had obtained, to ascertain if they had given evidence that their lives had been changed, and to obtain the consent of their parents to their meeting with me, both of which I deemed essential. In most instances, the answers to my enquiries were entirely satisfactory, and the result was, that I formed a class numbering, I think, forty-one. I am satisfied that with the exception of three or four, all of these boys were converted. Clearer and more satisfactory experiences I have never heard, and, as far as I could ascertain, their lives backed up their experiences.

As to the method of conducting the class: In my simplicity I conducted it pretty much in the old fashioned way; mainly as an experience or testimony meeting; but in a conversational style, free from all formality. Occasionally, about once a month, we held a prayer-meeting, and it would have done any of you good to have heard these boys pray. Then I gave them something to do in the way of working amongst their companions, and some of them were quite successful in bringing in new recruits.

I continued this class for many years, in fact, a number of the boys grew up to be men while in it. I kept a constant watch over them, and looked up the absentees, and this, with the addition of the new recruits brought in kept up our numbers. I had to contend with considerable difficulty at first. Some of the officials of the church looked with suspicion and forbodings on this innovation, and some did not believe in the conversion of children at all. At first the only place I could secure in which to meet the class was the infant class-room, and for a while we had to meet in the furnace-room of the church; but I felt that God was in the work, and was not discouraged. Eventually the class was divided, and I met a portion of the members in the Elm Street Church, then a part of the same circuit, and after the division of the circuit—I remaining at Richmond Street—it was given to the charge of the late Mr. William Walker, and I believe still exists as a class. Now what kind of men have those boys turned out to be? I am thankful to say that most of them have made good records. Not a few are occupying responsible positions in the world, and are men of integrity and men of God. Some, I am thankful to be able to say, are useful and honored ministers of the Gospel. Amongst them are the Revs. James Woodsworth, Superintendent of Methodist Missions in the North-West; his brother, Richard Woodsworth, Wm. Edwards, H. W. P. Allen and Arthur Bloomfield, now laboring in the United States. And how have they died? Mostly well. I have been privileged to visit the dying beds of some, have heard their expressions of firm confidence in their risen Lord, and in some instances have seen the glory from the unseen world lighting up their countenances, and have heard their words of triumphant expectation as they passed away to be forever with the Lord.

THE QUESTION DRAWER.

The Question Drawer was now opened, and a multitude of enquiries poured in, the chairman answering such questions as had not been covered by the discussions, or asking others to do so. Among the questions were the following :

Question—A brother speaks of a class of a hundred or more, the leader spending, say, two hours every afternoon visiting members of his class. Is it best that classes should be so large, even where possible? Could leaders ordinarily meet such claims or responsibility? As a rule, is it not altogether best that classes should be small; say, not much above the Wesleyan suggestion of twelve or thereabout, and thereby more talent be developed in leadership, and more care secured in supervision?

Answer—Such a class is usually so large because the leader has the time and gifts to make it interesting and profitable.

Question—What is the attitude of the young people toward the old people?

Answer—Is any Church represented here where it is not one of respect? (No response).

Question—What are the possibilities for the future of the present class-meeting?

Answer—Hopeful. The future class-meeting will not be the present, but a better one.

Question—Should the pastor take charge of a class?

Answer—Not if he has an efficient leader to do the work; but probably most ministers find classes for which they have not a suitable leader, or which, for special reasons, it is best they should lead themselves.

Question—In this age, when concentration of effort is necessary for the accomplishment of work, what action would you suggest to the pastor, the Church, the individual most affected? When one person is appointed by the

Church, and expected to perform all the duties pertaining to the office of class-leader, Sunday School superintendent, Bible-class teacher, local preacher, and president of a Christian Endeavor Society, should the person be his own judge as to which of these positions he should give the most time to, or should it depend upon the pastor or the people?

Answer—We should pray for the Church that is so poverty-stricken in material.

Question—What plan is adopted in the Methodist Church in appointing its class-leaders? So much has been said about their inefficiency, where does the responsibility rest?

Answer—See Discipline, paragraphs 175 and 190.

Question—Should one individual have more than one class?

Answer—If he has time and special gifts for the work, yes.

Question—Should catechumens be admitted to partake of the Sacrament?

Answer—If they comply with the conditions in the opening invitation in the Discipline, page 201.

Question—I have a friend who is a member of the Methodist Church, a sincere, devoted Christian, but through nervousness and timidity, very seldom goes to class. The mental strain is so great that she feels God does not require it of her; *but the Church does*. If she does not attend, is her name to be taken off the roll of Church membership, or if retained in the Church and remain from class, is it to be taken for granted that she has backslidden and grown cold?

Answer—The Church does not require attendance, when there is a good reason for absence.

Question—Would you give quarterly tickets to the children of the catechumen classes, and reckon them members of the Church?

Answer—The minister has to decide which of them are to be so reckoned. Discipline, paragraph 78.

Question—If a discouraged man is not fit for a leader, is a discouraged man fit to be a member?

Answer—A man may be a soldier who is not fit to be a captain.

Question—When should the leader mark his class-book? In the class, or after it is over?

Answer—During the class; this keeps each member's name before the class.

Question—A young woman aged twenty years, whose life is filled with helpful Christian work, says to her leader, "I do not believe that I am converted." What course should the leader pursue in dealing with the case? What should he say?

Answer—Get her to have the question settled between her soul and God.

Question—What would you recommend a pastor to do, in a case where a large number of the members, on account of *late hours of work*, cannot meet in class on a week-night or on Sabbath morning?

Answer—Do the best possible under the circumstances. Try Sunday afternoon or evening classes.

Question—Should the class *choose* its leader?

Answer—The class should have a voice in the choice of a leader.

Question—Can the Epworth League or Christian Endeavor be accepted as a substitute for the class-meeting?

Answer—It may in other Churches that have not the class-meeting.

Question—Would not the itinerant system work well, if applied to class-leaders; say, let a leader be appointed to a certain class for one month, then move on to another for same length of time?

Answer—An occasional change of leaders is recommended, but not so peripatetic as this.

Question—Should visitors be asked to lead the class, or should no one be expected to lead the class but the leader when able so to do?

Answer—Not every passing visitor, surely.

Question—Where several classes meet at the same hour, would it not be a good plan to have them all meet together occasionally, say, once a month, for a prayer and fellowship meeting, the leaders taking charge in turns, or the minister leading?

Answer—This is practised in many places, with good results.

Question—Could a pastor exclude a man from membership in the Church, if he did not attend class?

Answer—If he neglects it without sufficient reason. See Discipline, paragraph 86.

Question—Which is best: the leader to ask each of the members to speak separately, or to have it voluntary for each to speak?

Answer—Use both methods; keep out of ruts.

Question—If a minister were to write each member of the Church who does not attend class regularly, enclosing a blank to be filled up, giving their reason for not attending, would not valuable information be obtained, and the difficulties be met more intelligently? Has any minister here ever tried anything systematic on this line?

Answer—A very suggestive proposal.

Question—Should ministers confine their visits to once a quarter to the various classes?

Answer—In many churches this means more than one class a week.

Question—Can leaders or Sunday School superintendents hold their positions while they indulge in drinking intoxicants?

Answer—They should not.

Question—Is it desirable to encourage the meeting of classes in private houses in towns, or is the church the best place?

Answer—The church is usually the best place.

Question—Do you consider Scripture reading essential to good class-leading?

Answer—The Scriptures, read or spoken, are a very important part of every good class-meeting.

Question—How long should a class-meeting last? What difference in length should there be between a class of ten and one of fifty? Should the full time be always taken?

Answer—Surely not. The class should rarely exceed an hour.

Question—When is the best time for a class to meet, before or after morning service, or on a week-evening?

Answer—When most convenient for the members.

Question—How shall we overcome the objections of young people taking part in class-meetings when the older people are present?

Answer—Encourage brevity, simplicity and naturalness among the older people.

Question—Should a layman lead a class-meeting when a minister is present, or should the minister who may be present be asked to lead it?

Answer—As the leader thinks best.

Question—How would you suggest getting rid of a very officious class-leader, although very inefficient, without giving much offence and doing harm?

Answer—Get rid of him in the best way. If not solved otherwise, it is likely to be done at last by the class melting away.

Before the Session closed, Mr. Warring Kennedy moved, seconded by Mr. J. T. Moore, that this Convention desires in the most respectful and earnest manner to express its opinion that the regular and strict observance of section 6, page 32, of the Discipline of 1890, by the superintendents of circuits, relating to society meetings would lead to a higher appreciation of the means of grace on the part of the members of our Church, and would greatly tend to their spiritual improvement and conduct to increased watchfulness. The motion was adopted unanimously.

CLASS-LEADERS ORGANIZE.

Mr. J. T. Moore presented the report of the committee appointed to consider the question of forming a permanent organization of class-leaders. The committee reported : (1) That the Class-Leaders Convention adopt permanent organization. (2) That such organization shall consist of a president, two vice-presidents, a secretary, assistant-secretary, treasurer, an executive committee and a general committee. (3) That the following list of nominations be submitted for approval :

President—John J. Maclaren, Q.C.

Vice-Presidents—Warring Kennedy, Richard Brown.

Secretary—John T. Moore.

Assistant-Secretary—S. R. Allen.

Treasurer—Robert Awde.

The report was adopted unanimously.

TUESDAY EVENING, *November 3rd, 1891.*

The concluding Session was held at 8 p.m. in the Carlton Street Church.

The choir of the church was present, and the meeting was interspersed with songs.

Prayer was offered by Rev. Dr. Potts.

The President introduced W. W. OGDEN, M.D., who delivered an address on

THE RELATION OF THE LEADER TO THE PASTOR.

He said: I regard the pastor as the pastor-in-*chief*, and the leader as *sub*-pastor in Methodist economy. Such being the relationship that the pastor and leader sustain to the Church, it is of the highest importance that there exist, between these two pastors, the most complete sympathy and confidence. This confidence should be manifested wherever they are brought into contact in the work of the Church.

It is more than questionable if the best interests of the Church would be maintained if the feelings and attitude of the leader and pastor for each other were one simply of mutual respect; worldly concerns only could, perhaps, be truly conserved by such relations; but I submit that their important calling demands that these two persons, sustaining work in the Methodist Church of the importance that their respective positions indicate, should observe the greatest cordiality between themselves. One fault-finding leader, of sour disposition, will largely mar, if not completely neutralize or destroy, the influence of the very best and most judicious pastor in any given society. The leader ought to seize hold of every opportunity presenting itself to aid and second the efforts of the pastor in his spiritual oversight of the Society. He should never permit himself on any account to speak disparagingly of the pastor or the work in which he is engaged. The truly enlightened leader will, as far as possible, commend the pastor and his labors wherever opportunity is presented for such commendation.

He will encourage the members to faithfully attend the regularly appointed services of the Church, the prayer-meeting, the class-meeting and any and every other means for spiritual development and growth. He certainly will never on any account permit himself to criticise the sermons of the pastor, to the disadvantage of the latter, or say anything the tendency of which shall be to depreciate him or

his labors in the hearing of his members. Should differences arise between leader and pastor, or if from any cause misunderstandings exist, these should always, if possible, be harmonized or settled by private conference—out of the hearing of the members of the Church. Under such circumstances, and by so doing, there will be no sacrifice of principle or of individuality on either side, and the real work of the Church will be more rapidly developed and permanently strengthened.

The leader may be of the greatest service to the cause of God in the community in which he dwells, and greatly assist the pastor by sending out his members to labor, individually, for the extension of the work and the conversion of sinners, first attending to those in their own immediate vicinity. By earnestly pressing these matters on the attention of members of the Church, the leader may, by personal appeals, or otherwise, greatly help the pastor in the progress of his labor, and, under some circumstances, may thus greatly aid him in their performance, and even overcome any little inactivity of the latter—if he be at all indisposed to activity. In regard to a point like this, Coke and Asbury have said, “A spiritual body of leaders may counteract the otherwise pernicious consequences of a languid ministry.”

It is next to impossible for Christian experience to thrive well in the would-be possessors of it, unless the latter have clearly set before them, on frequent occasions, the light of Christian doctrine. Should this fail to be obtained, consequent upon the multitudinous claims on the pastor's time—outside as well as inside the Church—there is not the remotest excuse for the leader to fail in supplying the want.

An intelligent faith cannot by any sort of strategy be built upon ignorance as the foundation stone, hence if the pastor quietly and judiciously investigates the leader's library, indicating to him the importance, first, of a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures, and second, by a considerable acquaintance with such works on Christian biography and history as shall tend to constitute him, in his weekly converse with his members, “a workman that needeth

not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth," he will have earned the lasting gratitude of at least one particular society. But I will at once admit that no mere mental culture can be so galvanized as to answer in leaders—or in other people for that matter—in place of deep piety, and that anointing indicated by the Apostle. A better class of leaders, in a general sense, I doubt not will tend to the production of a more intelligent and progressive class of members.

If much is expected of a pastor in this regard, and also in the direction of a circumspect walk and godly conversation before the Church, no less should be expected of a leader in relation both to his class and the church with which he is connected.

The leader ought to obtain all the sympathy, counsel and encouragement from the pastor that the latter can possibly render. The efficiency of the leader in his work is largely dependent upon the active existence of this important fact; the withholding of it, or neglect of it on the part of the pastor is sure to reflect, injuriously at least, on the society of which both are members.

It is customary for the pastor to visit the classes once a quarter, and when this is done it is usually supposed he has done his whole duty in regard to the classes, but in the interests of the efficiency of the leaders, and in regard to the classes' advantage, one visit a quarter to the class by the pastor is much too seldom if it were possible to compass the work oftener.

The influence of the pastor in the Church, if he be the right kind of man, is or ought to be very considerable, and he may do much in his visitations and in the pulpit by giving prominence to the necessity of every member attending his class as regularly as possible; and in his pastoral conversations taking care to make gentle enquiry of members as to the regularity of their attendance upon their class. The leader, on his part, can aid the pastor largely, and greatly benefit the members by pressing upon them the desirability, the necessity of meeting at the Lord's table once a month, or as often as it is possible. There appears in some quarters, I fear, a little laxity on the part of many members

in this direction. Should the faithful pastor insist on family prayer daily on the part of the heads of families, the wise leader with deep solicitude for the spiritual development of the members of his class will not neglect to emphasize and press upon their attention (if their walk and relations with the world are to be what is most advantageous), its great desirability. Both will no doubt insist with Wm. Jay that "apostacy from God begins at the closet door," and that frequent private communion with God is essential to spiritual life and growth.

The leader should and will, no doubt, second the efforts of the pastor in pressing upon the attention of members questions of a doctrinal nature, so that these may be clearly understood, such as those specially insisted on by Wesley, viz., justification, regeneration, and entire sanctification, as questions and works of heart-felt experience and abounding satisfaction to the individual.

Finally, the pastor and leader should be in deed and in truth co-workers together with God in the salvation of precious souls, and in the "building up of believers in their most holy faith." The duties of the pastor and leader to the members of the Church are, if properly considered, very similar; in fact, if it is the pastor's duty to visit the sick, so is it the duty of the leader to visit the sick also; if it is the pastor's duty to pray with the sick and distressed, so it is the duty of the leader to pray with the sick and distressed also; if it is the pastor's duty and privilege to walk in loving sympathy with the dying to the very gate-way to the life beyond, it is no less the duty and privilege of the leader to march by the side of the members of his class to the glorious vantage ground, justifying and emphasizing, if need be, the exclamations which, in essence at all events, we often hear:—

"There are ranks of white-robed beings,
Bands of cherished friends I see,
And they wave their palms immortal
And extend their arms to me.
Now I fly to their embraces,
Lo! I shout beneath the dome
Of the everlasting temple,
Hallelujah! Safe at Home."

The REV. MANLY BENSON was called upon to give an address on the subject of

CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP.

He said :—Gradual development seems to be the law of nature and of grace. Slowly but surely comes the light, and gradually the curtains of evening gather. Winter and summer come gradually. Man is no exception to this law of development.

Memory, fancy, reason, reflection, lay folded in the mind, and like the bud opening into the flower, time is needed for both. Now and then an upstart comes to the front who knows it all, but let us be thankful that such men are few and far between. Occasionally a young convert is found, a mere child in religious things, who, with assurance, attempts in the class-room or love-feast to expound "the weightier matters of the law—judgment, mercy and faith," but whose zeal is "not according to knowledge," who would do well to sit as a learner in the school of experience. I would have you make a distinction between *testimony* and *teaching*. Time is needed to develop the child into a man; time is needed not for the witness to tell what he knows as a matter of experience, but in order that the believer may "grow in grace and in the *knowledge* of the truth," e'er he attempts to teach the great things of God.

As aids to the growth of Christian character (for we must grow or die), we have the open Bible, the preaching of the Word, and *Christian fellowship*. Upon this last-named means of grace I am to speak to night.

Christians should be communicative. It is not enough that we be as storehouses or sponges to contain and absorb all good that comes within our reach. Rather let us be as fountains, freely receiving as freely giving; or, as lesser suns, raying out the light coming from the "great Sun of Righteousness," that others seeing our good works, may glorify our Father in heaven.

Ants collect in colonies, bees in swarms or congregations, elephants feed in herds, fishes run in schools, for the sake

of communion. I see earth, air, sun and showers, uniting their forces and life-giving properties to give us the fruits, flowers and harvests for our enjoyment and sustenance. So with all true Christians there is a blending of experiences, a community of feeling, a uniting together, that the highest good may be obtained and the noblest ends reached. When communicative, we are the most useful. Interchange of thought and experiences tend to the increase of the Church of God in numbers and stability.

We see the desire of fellowship in little children, as well as among those who have grown to manhood and womanhood. The trend of Christian civilization is to build great cities, in fact the civilized world is being brought more and more into one great family. Continents, empires, kingdoms, commonwealths, are being brought into one great household, moulded and fashioned by the spirit of a common brotherhood. Soon the prayer shall receive its answer, "That they all may be one . . . that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me." God hasten the day !

Methodism promotes this spirit of fellowship and strengthens this bond of brotherhood by her class-meetings and love-feasts, and keeps the kindled fire in the hearts of true believers burning. Let us be careful that it is fire and not a reflection only, that it is the substance and not a shadow—that our religious life ripens into the fruit of good works, and is not a withered flower or blasted bud. See yonder tall chimney at the foundry. From its top is issuing flame, which, in the evening time, illuminates the sky with a fiery glow. The flame is an indication of power, but it is not power. Enter the foundry, go up to the blast furnace at the base of the chimney, watch the molten metal as it runs forth in streams of fire, there is power !

The blaze of oratory, the halo of wit or funny sayings that come from pulpit or platform, are not power. Go a little closer, examine more carefully. If under the preaching of the Word, inquiring ones are asking the way to Zion ; if under the teaching, believers are made strong in faith, and are growing in grace, that is power ! So I look at men's lives, not at the halo that may surround them in the house

of God ; when holy influences play upon them, in class and fellowship meeting, not their "feelings" only in the love-feast. I look a little more closely, and watch how they walk before the world—if there, "Conversation be as becometh the Gospel of Christ," how do they give to the cause of God ? how do they do business ? and if unconverted men who work with them at the same bench, transact business with them in our marts of commerce, stand by them on political platforms—if such as these are influenced by their consistency and godly lives, and say to them, "we will go with you, for we perceive that God is with you." That is power ! O for more of this kind of testimony and fellowship in the Church and world to-day ! If an enquirer sees us bow devoutly at the Lord's table on Sunday, and then discovers us over-reaching in a business matter on Monday, our testimony for good and God goes for nothing, nay, more, is a stumbling block in the way of sinners ! Our words and deeds, like thistledown, are carried far and near by all winds, and fall, we know not where. The first should be well chosen, the second done as under the eye of God.

Beware of relying upon emotion instead of principle, or the warmth that comes from other hearts in Christian fellowship for the fire that should burn in your own. Yonder sailing ship at sea depends upon outward influences to waft it on its way, and is frequently driven backward as well as forward. The swift greyhounds of the ocean carry their propelling power within, and, though outward winds may be unfavorable, push straight on to the distant harbor. Both may reach their destination, but mark the difference. Let "Christ in you" be the mighty, moving power of your life. Alas ! too many make their experience a stern light to see the past. Put it on the prow. Make it the "head light" to shine upon your way as you journey. It will thus save you from many a danger, and light many a dark way.

How Christian fellowship has helped and inspired us in the past ! To be good and do good is the essence of religion. Never mind the mountain-top experiences of which some speak. "Mountain-top" Christians are not the most

vigorous and best in the Church. "Mountain-top" experiences will come at times to all ; they are good to give us an outlook into the future. But a little reflection will bring to your remembrance that "mountain tops" are not the best places to live. They are good for observatories, but they do not produce the luscious fruits, fragrant flowers, and abundant harvests of the plains or valleys. So a little self-examination will show them that, down in the "valley" of perplexity and, may be, of affliction and sorrow, God gave you His special presence, and there you experienced the grace and mercy of God as never before. When traveling in strange countries, how we love to meet any one from our native land. So is it with God's children. This is not our home ; we are seeking a better country ; we are pilgrims and strangers. How cheerful to stop a little and commune with one another by the way, and talk over the past ; and with new aspirations, staff in hand, continue the upward climbing !

I walk in yonder conservatory among the flowers and palms, and coming out I carry with me the odour and fragrance of the place. So, when Christian people walk and talk together in the garden of the Lord's house, they catch the flame of virtue, and carry away the odour of a loving, Christ like spirit.

And now let us, as God's children and soldiers of the Cross of Christ, press more closely together, and like Napoleon's soldiers in that terrible retreat from Moscow, let shoulder touch shoulder, and fewer will be lost upon the mountains of sin. We cannot stand alone. Aggregation, and not isolation, is the divine law for aggressive Christianity.

"The lips of the righteous feed many," says Solomon. This bread from heaven multiplies by being broken into the language of testimony. Break it, my brothers ! Break it, my sisters ! Hand it out ! Hand it out ! and let the starving, hungry multitude, eat and live ! Men travel to the Holy Land and are thrilled as they are pointed out the spots where the Master spake to the multitudes, or stand where He healed the sick, opened the eyes of the blind, or

raised the dead. But we need not cross the sea or go to Palestine to feel the touch and thrill of Jesus' power.

Often as we have met in Christian fellowship in the class-room or in our love-feasts, have not "our hearts burned within us" as we talked of Jesus by the way. So near has God come to His own, that with overflowing hearts we have sung :

"Lo, God is HERE, let us adore," etc.]

But I must close, and with the testimony of one who yesterday parted from the Church militant to join the Church triumphant, I shall conclude.

Wm. Blight, known to you all, and known beyond the limits of this city, who in 1832 joined the Methodist Church, and for fifty-nine years held grandly on his way toward the Home above, is no more with us, for God has taken him.

On Sunday it was seen by physician and friends that he would not live many hours. He sent for me. On entering his room, he held out his hand and grasped mine warmly. I said, "The outlook is bright, is it not?" He could scarcely speak from loss of voice and weakness of body, but he nodded his head and smiled. I quoted some appropriate texts of Scripture. Still holding my hand as if he wished me to stand still for a minute, I waited. He opened his eyes and pulled me down toward him. His daughter said, "He wishes to speak to you." I put my ear down close to his mouth. He whispered to me these words, "I cannot talk much—but I want to give you—my experience; it's all in these words :

"The promised land from Pisgah's top,
I now exult to see;
My hope is full; O, glorious hope,
Of immortality."

"It's all in that—all in that." He let go my hand, and in a few short hours his spirit went up to God. Glorious testimony! Grand experience!

As Mr. Benson resumed his seat the audience broke out in song, singing the well-known hymn :

“ And if our fellowship below
In Jesus be so sweet ;
What heights of rapture shall we know
When round His throne we meet ? ”

MR. JOHN T. MOORE followed with an address on

WHAT CLASS-MEETINGS HAVE DONE FOR THE METHODIST CHURCH.

A fervent child of the Gospel, which was afterwards christened “ Methodism,” was entrusted by the Holy Ghost to the care of a handful of consecrated young men at Oxford University. The young collegians—the two Wesleys, Wm. Morgan, and Robert Kirkham—having an earnest desire to flee from the wrath to come, began, in November, 1729, to hold meetings, which caused this small band to be stigmatized as “ The Holy Club.” On December 1st, 1730, Wesley’s father addressed to them a letter to inspire them with confidence and hope. Upon this encouragement, Wesley writes: “ We still continued to meet together, as usual, and to confirm one another, as well as we could, in our resolutions . . . and to do what service we could to our acquaintances, the prisoners, and two or three poor families in the town.”

Thus, class-meeting, pure and simple, was the humble cradle in which they placed infant Methodism. Well may we with devout thankfulness exclaim,

“ See how great a flame aspires,
Kindled by a spark of grace.”

This cradle, like a frail “ ark of bulrushes,” was launched upon the swelling Nile of prevailing wickedness. But it was precious in the sight of God. As He watched over Moses, so He guarded this blessed babe of “ scriptural holiness ;” and, under divine blessing, the once despised Methodism grew and spread until, with gratitude, we can say that multitudes—far outnumbering the Israelites that

escaped Pharaoh's wrath—have been led by its instrumentality from the Egypt of sin into the Canaan of full salvation. This cradle of the class-meeting has ever proved a citadel of power. It is the impregnable Gibraltar of Methodism. Around it, "as the hills are around about Jerusalem," God has cast the cordon of His care, and over it there floats "the banner of His love." It is the sanctum sanctorum of our Church militant, where, upon the altar of faithful hearts, the holy fire shall ever burn "with inextinguishable blaze."

In those early days of obloquy and abuse, hither the despised disciples of the simple and earnest doctrine of "holy living" did resort to comfort and encourage one another, and, having received divine reinforcement, came forth, "clad in all the panoply of God," to wage a glorious warfare; and, ever since, it has been the rallying point, in every generation, of those godly men and women who "'listed for the war," and by whose fidelity and zeal Methodism comes to us, "Fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners."

The class-meeting has done for Methodism far more than the parade ground has done for the army. True, there is inspection, but, with this marked difference, that the Christian soldier is even more solicitous than his officer that all shall be right. He desires to bear the scrutiny of a keener vision than his leader's. The equipment is examined and the weapons of our warfare are carefully looked to, but "the Discerner of the thoughts" looks deeper still. Beneath the cross-belts and beneath the uniform, in the bosom of the soldier, there must beat the heart of a Christian hero, wherein there is enshrined love to the Master and loyalty even to the death.

The benefits of the class-meeting accrue primarily to the individual; but in turn they extend to his home, his Church and to the whole connexion. It is a spiritual school devoted to review, instruction, correction and consecration. The weak are strengthened, the timid are encouraged, the sorrowing are comforted and the faithful are fortified. It is, at once, the kindergarten and the graduation class of the

Church. Here the truths of the Gospel are applied in their adaptation to everyday religion, and frequently impressed and enforced by some simple allegory or apt illustration. The abundant use of Scripture quotations begets skill in handling the blessed Word; and, add to this the hearty singing of the grand old hymns of Methodism, and you have the quickening atmosphere in which sinners are converted from the errors of their ways and believers are edified and built up in their most holy faith.

The class-meeting has elicited the first trembling testimony from many lips that afterwards became eloquent in the Saviour's praise. The cultivation of this gift of utterance is the means whereby the class-meeting has incalculably enriched our Zion. It has given her an army of prompt and willing witnesses, ever ready to testify to the truth as it is in Jesus. This is the supreme proof of the Divine commission. Silence the class-meeting—and the tongue of these living epistles will be struck dumb—the stars will fade out from her coronet and the crown of her glory will fall from her brow—our churches will become vaulted sepulchres and their arches will re-echo the shadowy sophistries of the moral essayist—the evangelist will give place to the embalmer, until the ghastly corpse becomes intolerable—only awaiting the ritual :

“Dust to dust,
Ashes to ashes.”

Class-meeting ! it is the very essence of Methodism. From the class-meeting come our leaders, our exhorters, our local preachers, our probationers, our ministers and our missionaries. The class-meeting is the garden where these grow, and not these only, but also a host of stalwart apostles of temperance and fearless advocates of every moral reform. Stop the class-meeting and you strip us of a high priesthood—you take from the platform and from parliament many eloquent champions of the right, whose first public utterances were in this school of spiritual oratory—you deprive the Church militant of her most effective soldiery—and you rob her best and bravest members of a blessed means

of grace. Stop the class-meeting, and you close the spiritual gymnasium, where hundreds and thousands of God's athletes have been trained. These all interpose and, augmented by a "great cloud of witnesses," forbid the marauder to lay vandal hands upon this sacred institution where God has disclosed to many of His children their missions amongst men; where enthusiasm is kindled by example, and where the anointing of the Holy Ghost is obtained.

The subject is boundless! But why multiply words to demonstrate an axiom. That class-meeting is a priceless boon is a self-evident fact. Look at the heroic ranks as they muster! I associate in my mind that pathetic picture by Miss Thompson, entitled "The roll-call!" The conflict has been terrible—many comrades have fallen on the field; this is the remnant! All are scarred and battle-stained, but they answer to their names—thank God—they are still in the ranks. From the little drummer-boy to the white-plumed veteran, all are there; and while our hearts melt in tenderness at the sight, they break out into their battle-song! And what is it?

" 'Tis Jesus, the first and the last,
Whose Spirit will guide us safe home;
We'll praise Him for all that is past,
And trust Him for all that's to come."

But why continue? To recount "what class-meetings have done for the Methodist Church" would be to tell all the stirring story of earnest piety, heroic devotion, holy zeal and blessed results with which Methodism illumines the page of history. To-day, Methodism flows down among the children of men, a broad, beautiful river of blessing. At its fountain-head, and as the parent springs of its numerous tributaries, we find the overflowing waters of the "class-meeting." On the bosom of that river there floats the grand old Gospel ship, and streaming from the peak is the legend, "God is Love." She touches at every strand and gathers her passengers out of every nation and kindred and people and tongue, and delivers them—thanks be to God—safe at last in the blissful port of God's infinite glory.

It is the class-meeting that tells us how they fare upon the voyage. In fair weather we may not be anxious about them, but when the storm rages and the waves roll mountains high—then, hail them—and, instantly, there flashes back the signal: “All is well on board!”

Then, “God speed the good ship, and God speed the class-meeting!”

“Till all the ship's company meet
That sailed with our Saviour beneath;
With shoutings each other we'll greet,
And triumph o'er sorrow and death.”

REV. HUGH JOHNSTON, D.D., was then called upon to sum up the

LESSONS OF THE CONVENTION.

I am to gather up some of the fragments that remain. In the time allotted I can only glean and not harvest.

1. The first lesson impressed upon us is that the Methodist Church has an immense army of 8,000 or 10,000 class-leaders. They are the sub-pastors of the Church, and in our changing itinerancy they preserve the pastoral relation unbroken; they keep the members in living union amongst themselves, and preserve from loss amid constant change.

2. Our leaders are beginning to “magnify their office.” They see its importance. The idea of this Convention originated with laymen, chiefly with our honored president, and it has been largely carried to success by laymen. This gathering will not only produce a powerful impression upon the public mind, it will lead our own people to see more clearly the precious heritage which they have in the class-meeting. It has brought a number of our best leaders together to compare notes, plans and methods, as well as gather inspiration for more efficient service. As they join hand to hand, heart to heart, shoulder to shoulder, we realize that the spirit of devotion, self-sacrifice, and heroic consecration to Christ have not died out of the Church. Out of this Convention has issued a permanent organization, and we shall have leaders' institutes and training classes. Why not?

Especially in all our circuits will be held regular leaders' meetings, not merely for routine business, but to compare methods and give mutual encouragement and help.

3. As to the place of the class-meeting in the Church. We have learned that it rests on a solid, scriptural basis. The name is not in the New Testament, but the thing is there—an essential ordinance of Christ's Church. The New Testament Church was born on the day of Pentecost, and as converts multiplied and were added to the Church, they all "continued steadfastly in the Apostle's doctrine and fellowship, in breaking of bread and prayers." These are the four corner-stones of the living temple: doctrine, teaching and preaching; fellowship, communion, interchange of thoughts and feelings; breaking of bread, the Lord's Supper and prayers; united worship. This fellowship is an article of faith, a part of the Creed. We confess, "I believe in the communion of saints." When do we practice it?

This communion of saints is not only a privilege, but a duty, enforced by many injunctions of Scripture. Where do we find a better illustration of it than in the class-meeting?

The test of a true Church is Apostolic practice, and not the figment of Apostolical Succession.

At the Convocation sermon of Trinity College last week, the preacher, referring to the organic union of the Churches, said, "that it was necessary to scrutinize the claims of these so-called churches, that the Church of England rests her claim upon what is known as Apostolical Succession." Now Apostolical Succession is either the test of a valid Church or it is not. If it is not, then the course of a large party in the Church of England toward the other Christian "bodies" is, to say the least, intolerant, inconsistent and unapostolic. Wherein lies the value of Apostolical Succession? Why in the spiritual benefits that flow from a true priesthood! It should assuredly give Apostolical success. Yet that Church is far outnumbered by the Presbyterian "body" and the Methodist "body." And unless it can be shown that her members are on the average vastly more holy, more spiritually-minded and consistent than members of these "so-

called churches," there is this perplexing problem to solve : How comes it that the great Head of the Church has given greater success to these irregular, unapostolic "bodies," than to His regularly-ordained ministry, and His authorized, authoritative and Apostolical Church ?

We do not go too far in emphasizing Christian Fellowship as the test of a true Church, an essential element in the constitution of the Church of Christ.

4. As to the best methods of leading and sustaining a class. They are various, different types of classes requiring different methods. There must be adaptation and variety. Whatever promotes self-examination, deepens the spiritual life, develops gifts of service and Christ-like deeds, destroys caste and strengthens the bond of brotherhood, and promotes the free, unfettered interchange of thought and feeling, should be cultivated.

The leader must keep clear of straight-jacket methods and everything that is not free, social and elastic. The Word of God should have the place of honor and must always be read or quot-d. Bible readings on experimental subjects are helpful ; and practical topics like the government of the tongue, control of temper, self-denial, etc., give a reality and practicalness to our religion. But it must never be forgotten that the class-meeting is for the relation of personal experience, and nothing must be done at the expense of fellowship. Two things must be kept before the leader : First, edification, solid thought, not mere sentiment, but head-work, heart work, the cultivation of a robust piety. The other is interest. He must make the class attractive. Who should be asked to attend a stale, profitless, spiritless meeting ?

5. Coming to the mistakes of class-leaders—one mistake is, in being conventional and unnatural. We worship the stereotyped—we are slaves to mannerism, and when the leader goes through his old stock experiences and stale expressions, you will find that Bro. A. is sanctimonious ; Bro. B. unreal and artificial ; Sister C. is starchy and stiff ; Sister D. snuffles and whines, and Sister E. is funereal. There is not a cheerful, natural tone in the whole class.

An old fossil serves well in a museum, but it is out of

place at the head of a class. However, Bro. Maxwell has done ample justice here.

6. We have found that class-meeting literature abounds, and why could we not have in our S. S. libraries a department for leaders—a “class-leaders’ library”—to put all possible helps into the hands of these devoted men and women. It would pay the Church a hundred-fold, for there is nothing we need so much as active, intelligent, wide-awake, studious, consecrated leaders, to inspire and guide the “sacramental hosts of God’s elect.”

7. The model class-leader we have found to be, first and foremost, a good man—a man of rich experience and knowledge of the Scriptures; a man of large sympathy and good common sense; a man of courage and kindness, to deal faithfully with all his members. He begins at the right time, and does not spin it out unduly. He has the faculty of spiritual discernment, of making the right diagnosis, for, as Daniel Quorm says, “A leader is a kind of doctor to deal with the Lord’s medicines—clapping a strengthening plaster on this weak back, and a stiff mustard on that breast inflamed with worldliness, and giving a pill to stir some sluggish liver.” He does not think it necessary to speak to every one in the class, nor to have every one speak at each service. He will ask one member to reply to another’s experience, to give counsel and sympathy, and so stimulate thought and prayer and affection for each other. He will visit his members, but will not do all the work himself, enlisting the aid of his members. He will put each member under the pressure of work—doing something for the Master. He will take the meeting occasionally to the home of an aged or sick member. Turning the parlors of occasional attendants into a class-room now and then will stimulate and bless. He is one who never loses members. His class is not like a bag with holes in it. His book does not show an ever-dwindling record of names. Give him a member and he has him for time and eternity.

8. The model member is one who does not expect too much of his leader; does not require to be nursed and fed, coaxed and dandled. He always has something fresh in his

experience. People say it's the same old story from week to week. Not with the model member, who is a student of the Bible, growing in grace and making record of the Divine dealings with his soul.

9. And the model pastor is one who makes use of the wise and sympathetic leader in his pastoral work, and takes advantage of the quarterly visitation to get into direct, personal contact with the membership. He is one who always speaks well of the class, talks it up, never talks it down. Irreparable harm has been done to the class in belittling this service, not only in neglecting the renewal of tickets, but also by disparaging remarks in the pulpit and out of it. It is easy to satirize a means of grace, but you will still hear in the class-room the sweetest, deepest and most triumphant strains of vital godliness.

10. In regard to classes for the young, while important to have the children of Zion gathered in juvenile classes, it is also desirable to have the opening experience of the young chastened and mellowed by the wisdom of age, and the elder members strengthened by contact with youth. There should be the mixing of ages, sexes and conditions of life. The Church is a family, each class should be a miniature Church. In the family there are no class distinctions, so the rich and poor should meet together. We do not want our wealthy or more cultured members to depart from the simplicity of life and spirit. Let them keep in close contact with the godly poor—nothing will do them more good. The humblest and most illiterate may be made a great blessing to them in their rich experiences of divine things. The tendency of education is to repress, and this is felt in the religious life. Many ask, "why not let my life speak and not my lips?" But why should not both life and lips speak, especially when nothing is so eloquent as a work of grace in the heart?

The GENERAL SUPERINTENDENT being present, dwelt upon the benefits of gathered experience.

He said that he hoped to see similar conventions in Brampton, Hamilton, Whitby, Belleville, London, and other centres, where leaders and ministers from the respective

vicinities could gather, and as interesting and profitable meetings in their measure could be held as this has been. What we are aiming at is true Christian fellowship and its fruits ; and it might be well for a moment to consider what we mean by this fellowship, and where the Church of God is with reference to it. Here is a handful to take home, and it might be as easily gathered and kept this way as any. Count it on the fingers. True Christian fellowship is (1) Thinking together ; (2) Feeling together ; (3) Praying together ; (4) Talking together ; (5) Working together. Try, for instance, the common creed on the first, thinking together. How shall two walk together except they be agreed. "I believe in God the Father, Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth."

Now, what about this making ? Is it creation from nothing ? Is it evolution ? So away back these Christians wrangle and mar their fellowship. "And in Jesus Christ His only Son our Lord." What conflict as to the nature and work of Christ ? "I believe in the Holy Ghost." And yet many that say this over and over deny the very work of the Holy Ghost, in witnessing with the believer to his adoption and in the sanctification of his nature. "The Holy Catholic Church." What warring of definitions, asserting of claims, and maintenance of differences have we here ? Where is the thinking together ? If this is the place to begin and hold fellowship, there is a sorry chance. Look at the jagged divisions in the Church of God, what are called the heresies of the ages ? Even among Methodists themselves, we fly apart on the subjects of personal holiness, and the guidance of the Spirit of God. Is there not need that all should submit themselves to God and learn from Him out of His Word ?

Now, Christians should feel together in brotherly love. They must have deep and strong sense of loyalty to the common Leader, opposition to the common foe, and chivalric devotion to the interests of the common kingdom. "Love the brotherhood." There must be stirring sentiment and heroic impulse to the same aim, if they are going to have much fellowship. Where are the Churches to-day in this regard ?

Then, praying together would help them wonderfully, and for the few years last past, it is getting a chance to help among Protestant Christians.

How long is it since the various Churches would come together in diplomatic prayer-meetings? And do they all unite even yet? Prayer reveals man to himself, and discloses the character and mind of God. Surely we are all one in wretchedness and sin, and might unite in confession up to that point. And we all are therefore equally needy and helpless, and so might have fellowship there. But where are we in our fellowship?

Then talk together, rejoice together, sorrow together, plan together, talk over the interests of the kingdom together, and the common need and the love of the Lord. How much of it is done outside the Methodist Church, itself defective enough in this regard? How much of it is done among the Churches? Suppose we begin to talk and run upon the dogma of limited atonement and sovereign, personal election, how long do we talk in agreement? or run upon the figment of Apostolic Succession, or the claims of priestly absolution, how long do we talk in love and harmony? We must get in where we can talk together and agree to talk together. We must get into the centre of man's ruin and Christ's salvation. We must put away human devices and ecclesiastical increments, if we are going to have fellowship. We must break through externals and get in where we can feel the love and power of Christ. Then only can we work together. And only so working can we have true fellowship. When men are lifting together they like to feel the touch of the companion's shoulder. And the salvation of the world is burden enough for the strength of the entire Church, filled with the power of the Holy Ghost.

What if when men are lifting together, and one runs away and lets the load down on the other! Where is the fellowship of the Church as a whole in this regard to-day? I liked the remarks of the brother that was dealing with Christian fellowship in the quiet and saintly circles of our class-meetings. There, like the quiet operations of nature, the dew, the zephyr, the light, the divine influence distils, is

wafted, is shed upon the soul. I like these gentle, soft and quiet things and their lovely effects. But I confess to the opinion that we need an earthquake, a storm once in a while. The earthquake throws up the seam of coal, the earthquake reveals the gold vein. The earthquake and the storm make the slopes and the soil where the grasses flourish and the flowers bloom. And so I think some of these human barriers to Christly and Christian fellowship need the earthquake of civil action, possibly the plowshare of Divine wrath. We have so-called Churches that will not even fellowship other Christians on patriotic grounds : they rear their division in school and ordinance and will not work for Canada's good with fellow-Canadians. Perhaps the dew and the zepher are the cure ; but I confess, in the face of some man-made obstacles, I have not lost faith in the ripping earthquake, whether it manifest itself in revival, renovation or revolution.

On motion of Dr. Potts, the Convention tendered a resolution of sympathy to Mrs. Dr. Robinson, an aged class-leader, in the very valley of the shadow of death, and of condolence to Mrs. Blight, another leader, in her deep bereavement.

In a few words the Secretary of Education expressed his great delight with what he had heard, and prayed that as the fruits of this wonderful Convention there might be a revival of God's work all over the land.

The President conveyed the thanks of the Conference to the trustees of the churches in which the services had been held, and the proceedings were brought to a close by the Benediction.

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